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OPINION METER

This week's poll:

Would you support another round of austerity Fridays and unpaid holidays in government?

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INSIDE



Boat Sinks

Four crew members died and another was missing after a Seattle-based fishing boat sank in high seas off Alaska.

NATION...Page 14



4,000 Killed

A roadside bomb killed four U.S. soldiers in Baghdad on Sunday, pushing the overall American death toll to 4,000.

WORLD...Page 16



Sturdy Cars

Rescue officials and experts say that today's sturdy cars are hindering extrication of injured people.

OVERDRIVE...Page 17

The devil will be in the details—Reyes. PAGE 2
Ex-con in Good Friday poker robbery falls. PAGE 3

Over 400 medical records trapped inside IMC

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
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REPORTER

The Island Medical Center says that there are over 400 medical health results

trapped inside the clinic and rendered inaccessible due to IMC's suspension status.

Island Medical Center owner Antony Glad said that since the Department of

Public Health, suspended the clinic on March 4, he has been receiving numerous phone calls from people following up on their health results and medical charts.

"I keep getting phone calls every-

day and I really don't know what to tell them," Glad said.

He shared that one of his major concerns are patients with medical prescrip-

See OVER on Page 4

Ben, Tim to seek re-election



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial gestures as he delivers his remarks, together with Lt. Gov. Timothy Villagomez and Vicente N. Santos, during the Covenant Party gathering in celebration of the Commonwealth's Covenant Day at the Minachom Attdao Pavilion in Susupe yesterday. The event marks the 32nd year since the Covenant to establish the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas was signed into United States public law by President Gerald Ford.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Using the 32nd anniversary of the signing of the Covenant as a fitting backdrop, Gov. Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Gov. Timothy P. Villagomez announced yesterday their intention to run for re-election in next year's polls.

With over 100 supporters in attendance during the Covenant Day celebration at the Minachom Attdao pavilion in Oleai, Fitial and Villagomez vowed to rid the CNMI of its utilities problem and usher in a new era of economic growth if voted in for a second term under the administration's Covenant Party.

"We are facing difficult times but I

See BEN on Page 4

How deep is US economic abyss?

By RACHEL BECK and
ERIN McCORMACK
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITERS

NEW YORK (AP)—For months, Americans have been subjected to a sort of economic

water torture—a maddening drip of bad news about jobs, gas prices, sagging home values, creeping inflation, the slouching dollar and a stock market in bumpy descent.

Then came Bear Stearns. One

of the five largest U.S. investment banks nearly collapsed in a single day before the government propped it up by backing emergency loans and a rival stepped in to buy it for a paltry

See HOW on Page 4



Businesswoman and owner of Luco Sports Jaci Rae sews a golf club cover at her shop in Salinas, Calif., on Thursday, Mar. 20, 2008.



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Local

The devil will be in the details, says Reyes

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Reacting to fresh assurances that S.2739 will not be detrimental to the CNMI economy, Gov. Benigno R. Fitial's press secretary Charles P. Reyes said that a bill's intent is usually different from its implementation.

"Again, there's a lot of uncertainty. They have no regulations promulgated yet. The devil could be on the details. How can we agree on something that has no details yet?" he asked in an e-mail to the *Saipan Tribune*.

Reyes' comments came af-

ter Senate Energy & Natural Resources spokesperson Bill Wicker said that S.2739, or the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008, is sensitive to the plight of the CNMI and its people.

The governor's spokesman said that particularly worrisome is the provision on extending the transition period by five-year increments.

"Businesses have no way of knowing...if a big business comes in and they're putting in \$100 million investment, they don't know 10 years from now if they still have continued ac-

cess to workers. That's not good for business," he said. "Especially for businesses that will pour in millions of dollars here. They want to have assurance... it's not really good assurance for investment capital coming in."

Reyes also took issue with S.2739's language and the use of "may" and the local government being allowed to give only recommendations in the provision pertaining to the federal takeover of CNMI immigration.

"If you read carefully, you will again see that there are no guarantees. There is no guarantee that the CNMI will have adequate access to labor. The language only says 'may' and the governor can only make recommendations or suggestions that the federal government would be entirely free to reject or ignore. And Mr.

Wicker freely admits that the federal bureaucracies would have to draft regulations after the law is passed, so we really

do not have many specific details. Much is left to the federal government, to their own discretion, based on political more than economic considerations. It seems they are just saying, 'Don't worry, trust us' but too much is at stake for the CNMI economy," he said.

Opponents of the measure are also worried that the bill will restrict the CNMI's access to major tourism markets, especially China and Russia.

Wicker assured, though, that S.2739 champions growing the CNMI tourism industry, pointing out that section 701(b) of the bill states that this law "should be implemented wherever possible to expand tourism and economic development in the Commonwealth."

Section 702(b), Wicker said,

would establish a special Guam-CNMI visa waiver program that is specifically designed to allow visitors to enter the CNMI without a visa from countries such as China and Russia, who are not eligible for visa-free entry into the U.S.

Moreover, under paragraph section 701(b)(6) the governor of the CNMI may request "to add a particular country to the list of countries whose nationals may obtain the (visa) waiver," according to Wicker.

In addition, section 702(c) of S.2739 clearly mandate that the "governor of the CNMI may propose the creation of entirely new CNMI-only visa categories that 'may include, but are not limited to, special nonimmigrant statuses for investors, students, and retiree...'"

Section 702(b), Wicker said,

Bill appropriates funds for Tinian Jr./Sr. High School

The House of Representatives recently approved a bill that included funding for the electrical system upgrade for the Tinian Junior and Senior High School, using money originally set aside for the Tinian Elementary School.

H.B. 16-7, passed by the lower house on March 12, was introduced by Rep. Edwin P. Aldan.

"The recent [completion] of additional classrooms and library at the Tinian Junior and Senior High School has resulted in an increase in the voltage requirements of the school. The Legislature finds that there is a resulting need to increase the

capacity of the electrical system in order to accommodate the additional voltage requirements," read H.B. 16-7.

A transformer and other related infrastructure needs to be purchased and installed and the Legislature has deemed it a priority to install such a system to prevent any disruption of classes that would result from an electrical systems breakdown.

The amount of \$1.2 million was earmarked for the electric system upgrade at the Tinian Junior and Senior High School as well as for various projects at the Tinian Elementary School under P.L. 12-69. (Mark Rabago)

TeenTalk holds Youth Summit

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
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REPORTER

About 150 students participated in the first ever Teen Talk Youth Summit organized by the Public School System and the Division of Youth Services last week.

The youth summit, which was held at the ChaCha Oceanview Jr. High School for two days, sought to empower the youth through knowledge and skills so they could make healthy decisions, such as saying no to drugs, alcohol and sex.

According to PSS Teen Talk adviser Sharleen Crisostimo, the entire event was "youth-led."

"Teen Talk planned and practiced for months. They were facilitators and presenters. This is a prime example of youth empowerment," Crisostimo said.

Students from both public and private school and even NMC started meeting since September last year to plan and prepare for the summit.

Guest speaker included Department of Cultural Affairs

acting Secretary Melvin Faisao and Rep. Ralph Torres.

Faisao highlighted the importance of youth development and empowerment, saying that the two approaches "promote greater participation and involvement of youth in the socioeconomic and public affairs in the community."

Cisostimo said this was the first time Teen Talk hosted a youth summit. "It was a learning curve, but overall it was successful," she said.

She said they already have a number of ideas for next year's event, including a three-day summit instead of a two-day summit, inviting more students, and putting up more exhibits from community agencies.

"PSS and DYS collaborated and this partnership is crucial in empowering our youth. We are thankful to ChaCha Oceanview JHS administration and staff for allowing us to use their campus for the summit. We are thankful to all the PSS staff and DYS staff for their support," Crisostimo said.

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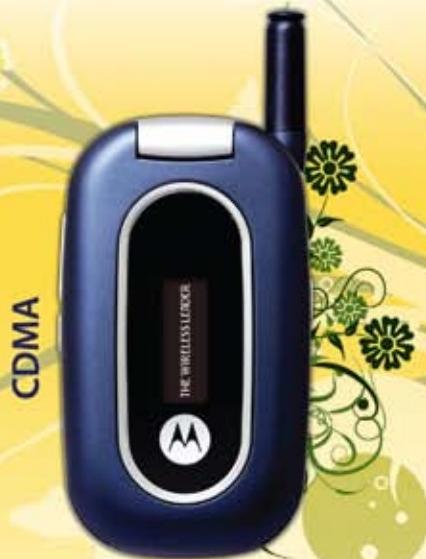
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3 suspects in Canton burglary are ex-cons

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

A teenager and two adults who were arrested during a burglary at the Canton Restaurant in Garapan Saturday morning are all ex-convicts, according to police.

In a news briefing yesterday, Police Officer 2 Jesse Stole said that Angel Chipwelong Ruben, Vince Camacho, and a 17-year-old boy have previous convictions.

Stole said Ruben was just released from prison in December.

Court records show that Ruben was arrested in 2004 for stabbing a man with a knife at the Liberation Carnival in Fishing Base. In 2006, Ruben was arrested for robbing a woman who was walking along Beach Road in Garapan. He also had other previous burglary and theft cases.

Public Safety Commissioner Claudio Norita said that Ruben, Camacho, and the juvenile were arrested by the same patrol officers—Chris Leon Guerrero and Edwin Aguon—who arrested robbery suspect Jesse Joseph Saralu Sunday morning.

Norita said that Leon Guerrero and Aguon had responded to a reported burglary in progress at the Canton Restaurant early Saturday morning.

Stole said that DPS Central had received a report at 2:58am from a security guard that a burglary was in progress at the restaurant.

"Officers Chris Leon Guerrero and Edwin Aguon parked their vehicle at Martha's Store then proceeded on foot to the other side," Stole said.

The detective said the two officers met with the security guard across the road.

The guard, who was assigned at a neighboring establishment, informed the two officers he



FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Department of Public Safety Commissioner Claudio Norita, center, is joined by detectives Kevin Maratita, left, and Jesse Stole during a press conference yesterday regarding the arrest of four robbery and burglary suspects.

Norita: Govt should get tough with recidivists

'Habitual offenders are wasting govt resources'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The government should throw the book at recidivists or habitual offenders because these people are just wasting public resources, according to Department of Public Safety commissioner Claudio K. Norita.

Norita said he is not favor of making deals or plea agreements with recidivists as these only allow these individuals to avoid jail time.

"We should throw the book at these people because they repeat the same crimes. And we are spending a lot of resources on these same people coming into the system," said Norita during a press briefing yesterday about the arrest of four ex-convicts allegedly involved in robbery and burglary cases over the weekend.

These people, the DPS commissioner point-

saw some men going to the backside of Canton Restaurant.

Officers Leon Guerrero and Aguon called for back-up unit. The officers, including the back-up units, secured all the exits of the restaurant.

Officer Leon Guerrero and another officer entered the building where they arrested the three, who tried to run and hide.

During the search, stolen items were recovered from the suspects, including a bottle of perfume, packages of Doublemint gums and candies, \$3 in bills and coins, ladies wallet, mini flashlight, two lighters, nine AA batteries, a box of rubber band, and one chrome pliers.

The detective said that the owner of the restaurant, who was summoned to the scene, confirmed that the items found in the suspects' possession belong to the establishment.

Stole said the suspects gained entry into the building by removing a glass from one of the windows at the rear of the restaurant.

Norita said his understanding is that Camacho and Ruben met in jail and became friends.

"And when they came out they formed this [group] and brought a juvenile into the picture," Norita said.

Canton Restaurant, which has been operating on Saipan 24 years now, has been burglarized thrice in the past four months.

Canton Restaurant owner Carol Wong Chan said that, although they thank the police for the arrest, they are also appealing to law enforcers to conduct more patrol runs in Garapan because of rampant burglaries.

In response to the businesswoman's appeal, the commissioner said he is the first person to admit the importance of conducting more patrols in the streets.

"Patrol is the backbone of the Department of Public Safety. In any good police work, patrol is the backbone," Norita said.

He said DPS resources will definitely be committed to reinforcing the patrol unit.

"It is just an operational issue and putting bodies into that," the commissioner said.

Ex-con in Good Friday poker robbery falls

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

An ex-convict wanted by the police for allegedly staging a broad daylight robbery at a poker arcade in Sadog Tasi on Good Friday was arrested during a car chase early Sunday morning.

Department of Public Safety Commissioner Claudio K. Norita announced at a news briefing yesterday that Jesse Joseph Quitugua

Saralu was apprehended when his car crashed off the roadway on Capital Hill during police pursuit.

Saralu, a golf course marshal at Lao Lao Bay Resort, was not injured.

Norita said the vehicle—a blue Nissan Altima with license plate ABZ-148 and registered to Saralu's sister, who is off-island—was impounded. The car had slight damage.

Police Officer 2 Kevin Maratita said that on Friday at

11:30am, a robbery was reported at Capitol Poker and Saralu was identified as the suspect through a surveillance camera inside the establishment.

A Korean female poker attendant sustained some scratches in the neck during the incident. She refused medical attention from responding medics.

Maratita said that Saralu was not armed when he robbed the poker arcade.

Based on the video and the poker attendant's statement, it showed that Saralu was playing poker at the time and had asked the attendant to check the machine because of a malfunction.

The detective said that, as the attendant was checking the machine, the suspect choked her from behind, causing her to black out. When the attendant regained consciousness, she found herself along the hallway near the restroom.

Maratita said the attendant saw

Saralu in the cashier's booth so she went straight to the nearby Amiga Market where she called the police. When the officers arrived, the suspect had already left.

DPS launched a manhunt against Saralu after the Superior Court issued an arrest and search warrants against the suspect and the vehicle he used in committing the robbery.

Maratita said that on Sunday at 3:19am, Police Officers Chris Leon Guerrero and Edwin Aguon were on routine patrol when they spotted the Nissan Altima heading north near La Fiesta in San Roque.

Noticing the patrol officers following him, Saralu, who was driving the vehicle, turned toward the former Hotel Nikko (now Palms Resort Saipan), then proceeded south.

The two officers chased the vehicle until it crashed near a residence on Capital Hill.

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BEN*From Page 1*

always believe that the most constant thing in the world is change. There is bound to be a change in our present economic situation, change that will involve better times," said Fitial.

The islands' chief executive conceded that the Commonwealth is currently not only in economic recession but depression but countered that, like everything else in the world and in history, the economy goes

in cycles. He promised that the light at the end of the very dark tunnel is coming soon.

"The very first thing, I would like to [continue] is the effort the lieutenant governor and I already initiated in curing the CUC crisis or sickness with the support of the Legislature," he said. "We still want to privatize CUC. We're still going ahead with that plan and we will not change [it]. The lieutenant governor and I strongly believe that the most viable cure now is to bring in people or companies who are experienced in that

field. [Those] who have been working on that field—power generation, transmission, operation, development—to help us cure our CUC crisis."

He vowed: "I will cure the CUC crisis before the end of our next term."

Fitial also trumpeted his political will, expertise in bringing in foreign investments, and good health as reasons for him to seek a second term.

"I strongly believe that I still have the political will and the resources—meaning I still have business connections in

the world—that would help me and my administration, together with the lieutenant governor, to stimulate the economic growth we need to turn the economy around," said Fitial. "I'm very healthy now [and] my circulation is going at around 100mph so I'm ready to rock and roll."

Villagomez, for his part, assured the people of the CNMI that he and Fitial will continue to work double-time to fix the islands' problems at the soonest possible time.

"We just have to do the right thing, which is to raise the econo-

my, bring it up to where it should be and also address the fuel prices that are presently [bringing] hardships to the people of the Commonwealth," he said. "I'm not looking at what to do in the next term or whenever that happens. What I'm concerned about is solving the problem now and that will prove if we are worthy of being re-elected or not."

Covenant Party chair Alvaro Santos said that the party is behind the Fitial-Villagomez reelection tandem and believes the people of the CNMI will give them a fresh mandate to con-

tinue to have accountability and transparency in governance.

While the Covenant Day celebration was organized by its namesake party, the Covenant Party, Rep. Raymond Palacios said he was disappointed that only party supporters and members attended the event.

The first-term congressman said the event was supposed to be a bipartisan gathering of the islands' leaders and community members to celebrate the signing of U.S. Public Law 94-241, which was signed by President Ford in March 24, 1976.

OVER*From Page 1*

tions.

The IMC doctor, Dr. Christine Brown, "cannot write out prescriptions for those patients who need prescription refills because their medical records are trapped in there," said Glad.

Another concern are patients waiting for medical test results to obtain treatment and nonresident workers who are not able to work until they get their alien health results squared away.

"If the government is really interested in the welfare of the people, they should create some kind of management so that the flow of these results can go

smoothly while they conduct their investigation, Glad said.

He said that not only is he losing money during this ordeal, but "these people have already paid for their medical and they should have access to them."

He said some patients have called, saying they are not able to work or process their entry permits as they lack their health results.

"One guy called recently, saying he wanted to go home but because his health results is the last pending documentation pending at Labor, he cannot," Glad said.

"They [Department of Public Health] are concerned about the health results of 40 or 50 people, but what about the rest of the other 400? And if one per-

son made the mistake, why shut down the whole clinic and withhold the results? Their lives are at stake," Glad said.

Since the suspension of his clinic, Glad said that no government official tasked with the IMC investigation has told him or his management team how to go about the pending health results and medical records.

"Until we open the clinic, they are inaccessible and are just sitting in there," Glad said.

He said he had not been able to go inside his clinic to conduct his own investigation.

Glad said there are a total of 33,000 medical charts inside the clinic.

According to Public Health Secretary Joseph Kevin Villagomez, "It is important that

those individuals that normally receive their medical care at IMC get continued care at either CHC or any of the private clinics to ensure continuity of care."

For those facing pressing health issues, they must be addressed now "rather than to wait for the reopening of IMC," he added.

DPH officials involved with the IMC investigation are scheduled to meet today to address the issues surrounding the suspension of IMC.

The IMC in Susupe, operated by the Micronesian Health Corp., was closed down by the Department of Public Health due to alleged noncompliance with rules and regulations. The immediate suspension

of the IMC started March 4, 2008 at 3:20pm.

Workers concern

Reacting to concerns raised by Philippine Consulate General Wilfredo Maximo, Glad said that Maximo "should worry about the situation of those Filipino workers who worked for IMC, if they are getting paid or who is taking care of them" during this ordeal.

He added that the consulate should also be concerned about those individuals who are not able to obtain their alien health results and are not able to process their entry permits to work.

"Instead, he [Maximo] is concerned that I should be cautious with what I say. Right now, they

[nonresident workers] are in limbo and many of them don't know what to do next," Glad said.

Maximo had taken issue with a statement made by Glad during an interview that aired on KSPN 2 where he said, "It is typical of the Filipinos...when they have problems...they [dis]appear and leave for some reasons."

Maximo said that Glad's remark was a slur on all Filipinos on the islands. "We take issue with your issuing a sweeping statement on the character of all Filipinos on the basis of this one employee, regardless of whether or not he is eventually found to have committed a crime."

The Philippine Consulate General characterized Glad's interview with KSPN 2 as disparaging against Filipinos.

HOW*From Page 1*

\$2 per share.

To the drumbeat of signs that seemed to foretell a traditional recession, this added a nightmarish specter—an old-style run on the bank, customers clamoring to pull their cash, a stately Wall Street firm brought to its knees.

The combination has forced the economy to the forefront of the national conversation in a way it has not been since the go-go 1990s, and for entirely opposite reasons.

As economists and Wall Street types grope for historical perspective—which is another way of saying a road map out of this mess—Americans are nervously wondering about retirement savings, interest rates, jobs that had seemed safe.

They are surveying the economic landscape and asking: Just how bad is it?

They are peering over the edge and asking: How far down?

And the scariest part of all? No one can say for sure.

■ ■ ■

Even before the crippling of Bear Stearns, the U.S. economy was acting as a slowly tightening vise—an interconnected web of factors combining to squeeze Americans from all sides.

Take Jaci Rae of Salinas, Calif. She runs a company, Luco Sport, that sells golf bags and accessories. The merchandise is made with foam, which is based on petroleum, so record oil prices have taken a heavy toll.

On the other end, her clients

are feeling the pinch, too, and cutting back. Sales to retail clients are an eighth of what they were a year ago. So Rae had to cut five of her 20 employees loose.

Now the company isn't buying products as far in advance. With gas prices running high, she waits for shipping companies to pick up products from her headquarters instead of having an employee drop them off.

She is nickel-and-diming expenses at home, too. She eats in every night, has stopped going on road trips to visit her family, dropped her satellite dish and canceled her monthly Blockbuster movie rental.

"I want to make sure I have enough money to feed my family," Rae says.

Signs of the pinch are showing up everywhere:

■ By the end of 2007, 36 percent of consumers' disposable income went to food, energy and medical care, a bigger chunk of income than at any time since records were first kept in 1960, according to Merrill Lynch.

People are treating themselves less often. The National Restaurant Association says 54 percent of restaurants reported declining traffic in January, and the government says eating at home increased last year for the first time since 2001.

Financial planners say that more than ever, parents are calling for advice on how to deal with grown children who have moved back in with Mom and Dad after losing a job or just to save money.

■ Less trash is being set on the curbs of Mesa, Ariz., where surg-

ing home foreclosures are leaving more houses empty. That means fewer homeowners paying the city \$22.60 a month for pickup. And William Black, the city's solid-waste management director, says people aren't throwing out as many appliances and bulk items, like furniture. They're sticking with what they have.

On top of an economy that was already groaning under the weight of a downturn, Bear Stearns came down like an anvil.

It tied together so much of what's wrong with today's economy—the housing crash, the credit crunch and a loss of confidence among investors and consumers alike.

Understanding how things got so bad means rewinding to the start of the housing boom. Wall Street and the banks made it far easier for people with shaky credit to get a mortgage—known as a subprime loan.

Investors wanted a piece of the fast-growing mortgage pie, so there was plenty of money sloshing around the market to pay for the loans.

Financial firms sliced up the mortgages and sold them as complex investments, finding eager buyers among pension funds, hedge funds and more who were chasing higher returns and willing to overlook risks.

As long as housing prices went up, the strategy worked. When they began to crumble, so did financial stability.

The same people who made a financial stretch to buy their homes are now defaulting on the loans at alarming rates. Many are "upside down" on their loans, meaning they owe

more on their mortgages than their homes are worth.

Nearly 9 million households now have upside-down mortgages, and for the first time ever, aggregate mortgage debt is bigger than the total value of homeowner equity—bigger by \$836 billion, according to research by Merrill Lynch.

The housing problem set off the dominoes: Surging defaults meant the mortgage-backed securities plunged in value. That dried up the money to fund new home loans, and lenders everywhere became tighter with credit.

Bear Stearns found itself in the cross hairs. Market rumors began to swirl about the size of its exposure to mortgage securities, whether it had ample reserves to cover potential losses. Clients and investors began to demand their money back.

"This problem begins with the fact that we underwrote mortgages sloppily, which means no one really knows what those assets are worth," said Lyle Gramley, a former Federal Reserve governor and now an analyst with Stanford Financial Group. "That makes bankers very leery, and has resulted in a significant contraction in the availability of credit."

The credit crunch means corporations can't borrow as easily, so they are delaying big projects, which cuts into the job market. And many of the same companies were already smarting from the downturn in housing, which has made many Americans uneasy about their household wealth and caused them to scrimp on spending.

■ ■ ■
The last time the U.S. economy

tilted into recession was 2001. And it was an entirely different animal.

Investors bore the brunt of that downturn as the stock market shook off the excesses of the late-'90s technology boom. Encouraged by their government—and fortified with tax rebates in their pockets—Americans kept spending.

Perhaps most importantly, there was no reason for anyone to doubt the stability of the financial system. There was no credit crisis to speak of, and the housing boom had yet to begin.

This time around, no one has declared a recession just yet: By the generally accepted rule, that takes two consecutive quarters of shrinking economic activity. The economy came close to stalling late last year but eked out small growth.

But the lack of an official declaration makes the pain no less real.

"I think the current financial crisis looks to me like the worst one since we got into the Depression," says Richard Sylla, who teaches the history of financial institutions at New York University's Stern School of Business.

Which is not to say this time will be anywhere near as bad—partly because, economists note, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke is a student of the Depression and appears to be steering the Fed toward avoiding the mistakes of back then.

That may be why the Fed moved quickly to back up JP Morgan Chase & Co.'s lifeline loan to Bear Stearns when it neared collapse.

The Fed dusted off other Depression-era tools, too. It allowed securities dealers to borrow directly from the Fed, a privilege once restricted to commercial banks. And it announced it would lend up to \$200 billion to investment banks in exchange for the banks' beaten-up mortgage-backed securities.

The idea is to maintain confidence in the American banking system. If that fails—if more Bear Stearns episodes emerge—it could gum up the entire economy, historians note.

"No one would trust anybody else, no one would be willing to do business," said Charles Jones, a finance professor at Columbia Business School. "And if that happens, the economy would feel that right away. So the Fed is doing what it can."

Another key difference: Today, the United States is just one piece of a complex global economy. A century ago, an American financial crisis was America's problem. Today, emerging economies provide an extra layer of insulation.

"People are still going to eat in China and India. They're going to be buying clothes and cars and airplanes," says Robert A. Howell, a distinguished visiting professor of business administration at Dartmouth. "So I think it's a whole different ballgame."

A better comparison might be the economic downturn that gripped the United States in the early 1970s, a time now widely remembered for long lines at the pump. Today gas is plentiful, but summer drivers face the scary prospect of paying \$4 a gallon.

Frica backs austerity Fridays, unpaid holidays

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR

With \$7.2 million in cost overruns in the first six months of the fiscal year, Sen. Maria Frica T. Pangelinan said the Legislature should seriously look into implementing austerity Fridays and unpaid holidays.

In her report on H.B. 16-51, the chairman of the Senate Committee of Fiscal Affairs said that the two items should be seriously considered in order for the government to recoup expenses incurred in the past six months of no austerity measures.

Austerity Fridays mandate that government offices be closed ev-

ery Friday. It is the same measure enacted by Public Law 15-24, which created the biweekly austerity holidays that expired at the end of Fiscal Year 2007, Sept. 30, 2007.

Unpaid holidays mean that employees who do not work on official CNMI holidays will not be paid for that day. It is the same measure that the Governor's Office has requested the House and Senate to pass into law since the 15th Legislature.

In order to compensate for the cost overruns incurred since Oct. 1, 2007, Pangelinan said the twin measures should take effect from April 1, 2008, to Sept. 8, 2008.

In addition, Pangelinan stated



Pangelinan

in her report that austerity measures don't come without any baggage, as witnessed during the previous round of austerity Fridays last year.

"Austerity measures such as these have additional effect, not immediately apparent. Because gross wages are lowered, amounts owed for insurance and Medicare and retirement are also lower, even though the rate at which they are calculated would remain the issue."

The Senate unanimously voted to adopt last Wednesday Standing Committee Report 16-08, which recommended that the House of Representatives-approved budget be referred to a joint committee.

The House passed the 2008 appropriations bill on March 3 on first and final reading. It was introduced last Feb. 29 by House Way and Means chair Ray Yumul and earmarks \$164.25 million for all government agencies under the General Fund and \$3.23 million for the Department of Public Lands, which is funded by income from leases on public lands.

In addition, the bill distributes \$5.117 million in Compact Impact funds, or reimbursement money from the federal government to the CNMI for hosting Micronesian citizens.

The budget will apply to the current fiscal year, which runs from Oct. 1, 2007 to Sept. 30, 2008.

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EASTER SUNDAY TRASH

A large mound of trash from the Easter Sunday celebration is seen scattered behind the Bicol Pavilion in Susupe yesterday.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Neighborhood Team to share findings soon

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
rianne_pangelinan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

matters into their own hands in building a safe, clean, and healthy community.

It is hoped that this process will result in a healthy, safe and thriving community of villages, enclaves and hamlets throughout local communities on Saipan.

She added that the process is also intended

Included as project activities are pothole repair, junk vehicle and scrap metal removal, debris removal, street sweeping, graffiti abatement, vacant lot clean-ups, animal control management, storm water management, land use violations, Saipan zoning violations, inner villages, enclaves and hamlets beautification, immunizations (where needed), fire safety inspections, village

LOGO entry / exit signage with mini floral landscape, village beautification (planting of flowers, trees, shrubs), taking stock and cleaning of historic sites & buildings and other assets, inventory of trade and commerce activities, taking inventory of public service facilities, and the possibility of having a village directory at major landmark locations such as the Chalan Kanoa Diocese, U.S. Post Office, or Saipan Municipal Council.

Through this public forum, residents will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the team's findings and plan of action. They will also be given the opportunity to air out concerns and share their ideas on how and what to prioritize in improving the quality of life in the inner villages.

According to Saipan Municipal Council chair Antonia M. Tudela, the village initiative calls for building and sustaining local capacity in every village. "Residents are expected to be a part of the improvement in their districts as stakeholders and shareowners of the village community."

"Much attention and resources have been dedicated to our hotels, beaches, scenic vistas, ports of entry, tourist sites and related areas where tourists occasion," Tudela said. "There is a need to apply the same amount of energy and enthusiasm in dedicating ourselves to improving the quality of life for the people" in the inner villages.

According to Tudela, the purpose of the village initiative is to empower local residents to take

The Neighborhood Enhancement and Revitalization team is scheduled to meet this morning to make final presentation plans at the village forums next month.

The Neighborhood Watch Task Force is also scheduled to meet this morning shortly thereafter.

Ex-Guam senator Dierking dies

Former Guam senator Herminia D. Dierking passed away yesterday.

Dierking served as the director of the Bureau of Budget and Management Research under Guam Gov. Ricky Bordallo and was subsequently elected to the 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, and 22nd Guam Legislatures. She was also a professor at the University of Guam.

"Today our island mourns the passing of former Senator Herminia D. Dierking, a devoted public servant and a leader in our island community," said Guam Rep. Madeleine Z. Bordallo in a statement.

"As a professor at the [UoG], she touched the lives of many young students. As a former senator and my colleague in the Guam Legislature, she brought insight and knowledge to local public policy. Her contributions

to the people of Guam will be remembered through her work as a legislator, a teacher, and as a dear friend to many," said Bordallo.

"My thoughts and prayers go out to her husband, John, their children and grandchildren, and to her family and friends. Herminia will be dearly missed by all who knew her," she added.

Guam Gov. Felix Camacho also issued a statement, saying "Our island has lost a beloved leader, educator and public servant who dedicated herself to her island and her people. The former senator will be remembered in our community as a woman of great character who contributed much to our island. Our hearts and prayers go to her family at this difficult time."

No other details were immediately available. (*Saipan Tribune*)

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 <p>WEDNESDAY <i>Chinese FIESTA</i></p>	 <p>THURSDAY <i>Authentic Teppanyaki FIESTA</i></p>
 <p>FRIDAY <i>Seafood FIESTA</i></p>	 <p>*SATURDAY <i>Family FIESTA</i></p>
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11 initiatives propose amendments to NMI charter

By SAIPAN TRIBUNE STAFF

The following are the 11 House Legislative Initiatives that are currently pending in the CNMI House of Representatives.

A House legislative initiative is a bill introduced in the House of Representatives that is intended to create an initiative to amend the CNMI Constitution.

For a full copy of the pending initiatives, visit www.camachocnmi.com.

HLI 16-11

To amend Article III, Section 9(a), of the Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands to prohibit the withdrawal of any funds from the General Fund except by appropriations made by law.

—Authored by: Rep. Diego T. Benavente, and others

HLI 16-10

To amend Article IV, Section 5 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana

Islands to authorize the election of the chief justice and presiding judge by a majority of the justices and judges, respectively.

—Authored by: Rep. Ray N. Yumul

HLI 16-9

To amend Article XV, section 1(c) and (e) of the Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands. (*Editor's Note: This relates to the selection of a teacher representative to the Board of Education. Under the proposal, the teacher representative shall be selected by all teachers within the Public School System and the selection process will be established by law.*)

—Authored by: Rep. Justo S. Quitugua

HLI 16-8

To amend Article XII of the Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands by adding a new Section 7 to allow each senatorial district to amend or repeal the restrictions on alien-

ation of land with respect to its senatorial district.

—Authored by: Rep. Victor B. Hocog

HLI 16-7

To improve the efficiency and accountability in the Legislative Branch of government.

—Authored by: Rep. Heinz S. Hofschneider

HLI 16-6

To amend Article III Section 9 of the Constitution of the Northern Mariana Islands to require the adoption of an annual budget. (*Editor's Note: The bill prioritizes funding for the Public School System, Public Health, and Public Safety, and sets deadlines for action on the budget bill, as well as corresponding penalties if the*

deadlines are not met.

—Authored by:

Rep. Heinz S. Hofschneider

HLI 16-5

To amend Section 4 of Article X of CNMI Constitution. (*Editor's Note: This initiative proposes to authorize the CNMI government to borrow money for operating expenses during extreme situations and upon approval of the people through an initiative.*)

—Authored by:

Rep. Heinz S. Hofschneider

HLI 16-4

To change the term permitted for transfer of a leasehold interest in private lands. (*Editor's Note: This proposes to extend private land leases from the 55 years currently allowed by the CNMI*

Constitution to 75 years.

—Authored by:

Rep. Heinz S. Hofschneider

from MPLT investments.)

—Authored by:

Rep. Heinz S. Hofschneider

HLI 16-2

To authorize the election of an Attorney General.

—Authored by: Rep. Francisco S. Dela Cruz

HLI 16-1

To amend Article IV to establish a commission on the judiciary and to establish that written opinions and decisions of the CNMI Superior Court and Supreme Court be issued within one year of submission of the case for opinion or decision.

—Authored by: Rep. Stanley T. McGinnis Torres

Source: www.camachocnmi.com

Deportation sought for MIA farmer

The Division of Immigration has filed a deportation case against a Bangladeshi farmer who is allegedly an overstaying alien for about a year now.

Immigration investigator Nicolas Reyes stated in court papers that MD Golgar H. Bhuiyan is a deportable alien pursuant to Commonwealth law and regulations.

Superior Court Associate Judge David A. Wiseman ordered the 34-year-old Bhuiyan to appear in court and explain why he should not be deported.

Reyes said Bhuiyan's non-resident worker's entry permit, issued on Nov. 9, 2006, expired on Oct. 5, 2007.

Reyes said he received a memorandum from the Depart-

ment of Labor director regarding Bhuiyan's settlement agreement with his previous employer on March 15, 2007. Reyes said the respondent was granted 45 days to transfer to another employer.

Bhuiyan found a new employer and submitted his non-resident worker's application at Labor Processing Section on April 26, 2007.

The investigator said that the Bangladeshi's prospective employer, however, submitted a cancellation request letter to Labor.

As mentioned in the letter, Bhuiyan was nowhere to be found and never made any attempt to locate the employer in reference to his employment status. (*Ferdie de la Torre*)

DISCONNECTION NOTICE

PTI would like to remind its customers that payments not received by close of business on March 25th, will result in temporary suspension of all telephone services after 6:00 p.m. on that day. To prevent temporary suspension, customers must pay their bills on or before March 25th.

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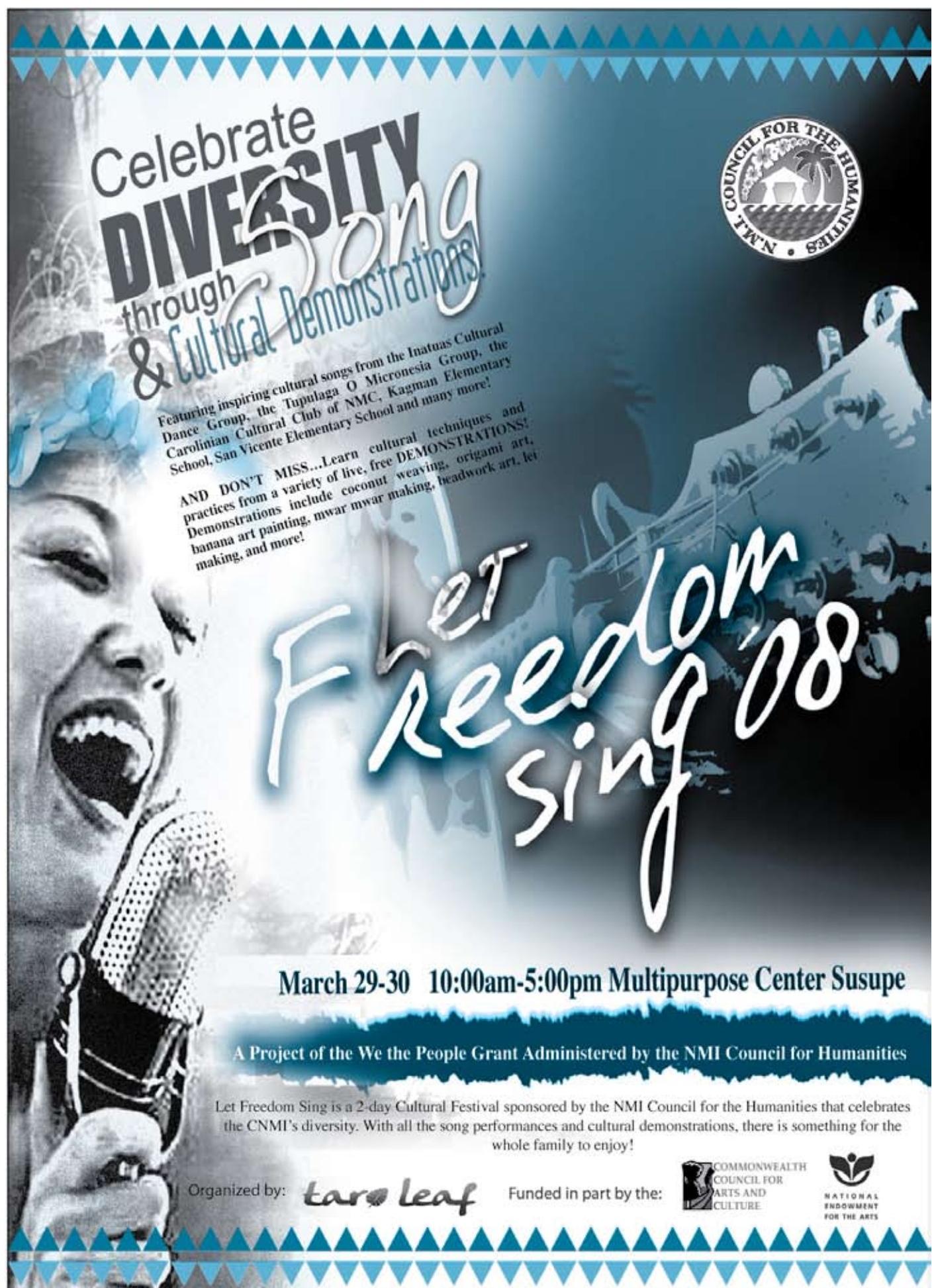
Per an earlier announcement, PTI is no longer mailing out past due notices as of 11/01/06.

* You have the right to dispute this notice. You must state your claim in person or in writing no later than March 25th. You must pay any amount not in dispute to avoid disconnection. Payment denotes acceptance of all charges.

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Let Freedom Sing '08

March 29-30 10:00am-5:00pm Multipurpose Center Susupe

A Project of the We the People Grant Administered by the NMI Council for Humanities

Let Freedom Sing is a 2-day Cultural Festival sponsored by the NMI Council for the Humanities that celebrates the CNMI's diversity. With all the song performances and cultural demonstrations, there is something for the whole family to enjoy!

Organized by: taro Leaf

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COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

DPH works to get AEDs in schools

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
rianne_pangelinan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Public Health has opened up a dialogue with the American Health and Safety Training Center in Northern California, which could assist the CNMI in obtaining automatic external defibrillators for the school system.

According to Medical Affairs director Dr. Edward Cornette, the Center has donated AEDs to schools in California and has showed an interest in assisting the CNMI obtain AEDs for schools.

Cornette said that, although the islands' geographical location prevents the CNMI from

availing of the Center's other services, AHST and DPH "will make an attempt to overcome some obstacles in this regard."

He said that a more detailed discussion with Robert Trapp of the AHST will commence in the next 10 days or so.

"It will be based on who donates the items as well as the particular school to have five CPR/AED-trained individuals. We need to determine if that is for each individual school or the system as a whole," Cornette said.

He said the placement of AEDs in schools is "just a measure to attempt to address the need in the community."

He said that sudden deaths

during sports activities are not something new to school sports environment.

The Center is also a full service distributor of Philips AED products, providing AED units, training, medical direction, and event review.

According to its website, Emergency Medical Services may not respond fast enough to save someone in cardiac arrest.

"In fact, the national average response time is 10-12 minutes, so even the best EMS responders could have difficulty arriving in time. Besides traffic, consider the time needed to make it to a patient's side at a ball game or in a crowded church for example," the

AHST stated.

AEDs are believed to offer a practical way to save more lives because they are designed for use by nearly anyone. Widespread deployment of AEDs gives sudden cardiac arrest victims the best chance of survival.

Recently, the CNMI Chapter of the American Red Cross joined with the Marianas Visitors Authority in distributing six first aid kits to popular dive sites in the CNMI.

The first aid kits contain an emergency bottled oxygen, an automatic external defibrillator, and a first aid kit.

There are currently a total of 10 AED units in the CNMI.

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

MARCH 25, 2002

'Please give Rota a chance'

Embattled Rota Mayor Benjamin Manglona-criticized by some for his support for the Global Country for World Peace, a group that has ties with meditation guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi-spoke in defense of the group's agenda on the island, saying it is Rota and its people that stand to benefit from the group's projects. Surrounded by members of the group-all dressed in coats and ties-at the conference room of Saipan Mayor Juan Borja Tudela, who was also present, Manglona told reporters Friday that the group has no suspicious agenda, as it simply aims to promote world peace.

Some CUC workers found using drugs

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has began subjecting its employees to drug tests, and a few employees have already yielded positive results for substance abuse. Those who have undergone the tests include meter readers, and those from the utility agency's power distribution and power generation sections.

MHS teacher is Miss CNMI Universe 2002

Intelligence and witticisms flashed throughout this year's coronation night of the Northern Marianas beauty pageant, as three women of non-Chamorro descent bagged the top three positions in the Miss CNMI Universe 2002. Twenty-two-year-old Marianas High School teacher Virginia Gridley, a Palauan-American, took home the coveted 2002 Miss CNMI-Universe crown during Saturday's event held at the Dai Ichi Hotel.

MARCH 25, 2003

Reyes is Ms. NMI 2003

Dark horses emerged victorious during the coronation night of the 2003 Miss Northern Marianas beauty pageant at the Saipan Nikko Hotel Saturday night. With hordes of supporters rooting for their candidates, three young women bested five others in an array of competition and question-and-answer portion that gave all contestants equal and unbiased footing during the entire contest.

Benavente to convene water taskforce

Lt. Governor Diego T. Benavente will soon convene the newly created taskforce on water to map out plans and strategies. "This is a major community concern. We really have to sit down and plan our course of action," Benavente said. He said he has asked the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. to provide him with all the pertinent information. "I'm expecting to get the information from agencies so we can meet as soon as possible," he said.

PIDB raises minimum loan to \$20K

Members of the Pacific Islands Development Bank have decided to raise the minimum loan limit to \$20,000 from the previous \$2,500 to ensure more solid development projects in island communities. Yap governor Robert A. Ruecho', who attended last Saturday's PIDB annual meeting on Saipan, said in an interview yesterday that the change of amount was recommended and approved by representatives of the seven-member PIDB, which includes the CNMI, Guam, Yap, Palau, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae.

MARCH 25, 2004

Relief for CDA borrowers pushed

The Senate on Tuesday passed legislation that proposes to authorize the Commonwealth Development Authority to grant credit relief to borrowers who have defaulted on their loans with the agency's Development Corporation Division. The legislative measure, docketed as Senate Bill 14-48, was approved on first and final reading during a session.

Pell grant reimbursement status taken off soon

The Pell Grant reimbursement status of Northern Marianas College will be lifted upon its submission of three clean batches of files to the federal government, according to NMC interim president Tony Deleon Guerrero. In a report to a House panel, Deleon Guerrero said the San Francisco office of the U.S. Department of Education has assured NMC that its reimbursement status will be removed "as soon as three clean packet submissions are free of errors at the rate of 10 percent or less for the entire packet."



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CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CONDITION (at December 31, 2007 / \$ in thousands)

Assets		Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity
Cash and due from banks	\$ 22,937	Liabilities:
Federal funds sold	18,400	Deposits:
Interest bearing deposits with banks	48	Non-interest bearing
Total cash and cash equivalents	41,385	Interest bearing
Interest bearing deposits with banks	10,154	Total deposits
Investment securities available for sale	226,442	Accrued interest payable
Investment securities held to maturity	60,374	FHLB advance
Federal Home Loan Bank stock, at cost	2,198	Long-term borrowing
Loans, net of allowance for loan losses	445,842	Other liabilities
Accrued interest receivable	4,440	Total Liabilities
Premises and equipment, net	23,498	Commitments and contingencies
Goodwill	783	Stockholders' Equity:
Other assets	14,166	Common stock
Total Assets	829,282	Additional paid-in capital
		Retained earnings
		Accumulated other comprehensive loss
		Common stock in treasury, at cost
		Total Stockholders' Equity
		\$ 829,282
		Total Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS BRANCHES STATEMENT OF CONDITION

(at December 31, 2007 / \$ in thousands)

Assets		Liabilities
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 4,189	Deposits:
Loans, net of allowance for loan losses	57,537	Non-interest bearing
Accrued interest receivable	269	Interest bearing
Premises and equipment, net	3,624	Total deposits
Other assets	2,199	Accrued interest payable
Due from Headquarters	91,956	Other liabilities
Total Assets	\$ 159,774	Total Liabilities
		\$ 159,774

 **COMMUNITY BRIEFS**
Neighborhood Watch sets island-wide meeting today

The newly created Municipal Neighborhood Watch Task Force will be hosting an island-wide meeting for all Saipan residents today, March 25, to address the rising criminality in villages.

The meeting, co-hosted by the Office of the Mayor of Saipan and the Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council, will be held at 6pm at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center on Beach Road in Susupe.

The Task Force will gather preliminary areas of concern about the increasing number of criminal activities in the villages of Saipan. A series of nightly meetings will be held soon.

Do you want to be a volunteer crime fighter in your village? Attend this important meeting and let your interest and voice be heard. (PR)

Junior High Mock Trial set

The CNMI Humanities Council will be hosting a Junior High Mock Trial on Saturday, March 29, 9am to noon at the U.S. District Court chamber, Horiguchi Building, Garapan.

Six junior high school teams will participate in a non-competitive trial presided over by Rep. Joseph Camacho (R-Saipan).

This program, started by the council two years ago, is intended to introduce junior high school students to the mock trial program in an enjoyable format to prepare them for the competitive mock trial program that they will encounter in high school.

Let Freedom Sing festival set

The CNMI's cultural diversity will take center stage during the Let Freedom Sing festival on March 29-30, 10am to 5pm daily at the Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.

The festival will showcase live performances of ethnic songs and demonstrations of cultural practices and traditions.

Article XII online forum

The CNMI Humanities Council is hosting an online forum, moderated by Dr. Elizabeth D. Rechebe, on issues that relate to Article XII of the CNMI Constitution.

Article XII is the provision that restricts land ownership in the CNMI to persons of Northern Marianas descent.

The public is invited to express their thoughts on a variety of Article XII topics via this forum at: <http://www.nmihumanities.org/forum3/>.

Contact Council staff at 235-4785 for further details.

Positions open for GOP national convention

The CNMI Republican Party is pleased to announce the avail-

ability of the following positions for interested individuals from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to participate in the upcoming Republican National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota from Sept. 1 to 5, 2008.

The following programs are available:

- Page program—applicant must be at least 16-25 years old;
- Intern program—applicant must be currently enrolled at any postsecondary educational institution; and
- Delegate aide—applicant must be able to assist the delegation and be at all meetings called by the chairman.

All expenses to attend the RNC convention must be the responsibility of the applicant.

Interested individuals must submit a letter of intent, resume, and complete an application. Deadline is April 15, 2008.

Final selection will be made by the RNC Committee on Arrangements. Submit the required documents through email at ana.teregayo@gmail.com. (PR)

Petition to graduate deadline extended

The Northern Marianas College has extended the deadline for the submission of petitions to graduate for Spring 2008. The new deadline is March 28, 2008. Any questions or concerns regarding the Spring 2008 graduation can be addressed to Rosaline Cepeda, Acting Director of the Office of Admissions and Records, at 234-5498 ext 1540 or email rosalinec@nmc-net.edu.

Flame Tree Arts Festival registration opens

Registration is now open until April 17, 2008, for the 27th Annual Flame Tree Arts Festival. Registration forms are available at the Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture on Capital Hill, Saipan. Registration costs are \$650/food and business vendors, \$350/non-profit, \$150/artists, and \$100/information. The Flame Tree Arts Festival will be held April 24-27, 2008, at Civic Center and is Micronesia's largest annual arts and culture celebration. For more information about the Flame Tree Arts Festival, contact CCAC at 670-322-9982/3 or e-mail marianarts@pticom.com.

MHS Class of '88 meeting

Members of the Marianas High School Class of 1988 are reminded that there will be a meeting on Thursday, March 27, 2008, at 6:30pm, at the residence of Melvin and Eleanor Cepeda in As Lito behind Saipan International School. All classmates are encouraged to attend this important meeting.

For more information, contact Lillian Lizama Tudela at

287-3742 or Dennis Villagomez at 287-4689. (PR)

English placement tests set

The Northern Marianas College will be administering the English Placement Tests on the following dates:

- April 2, 2008, 9am - 12pm, Room: D-1
- April 4, 2008, 4pm - 7pm, Room: D-1

Bring a valid photo ID (driver's license, passport or school ID) and pencils.

There is a \$25 fee that must be paid in advance at NMC's Finance Office (M-F, 9am - 4pm). Students will not be admitted to the testing room without proof of payment. For more information, call the Languages & Humanities Dept. at (670) 234-5498 Ext. 287-4300. (PR)

2000 or 1242. (NMC)

MHS Class of '83 reunion reminder

The Marianas High School's Class of 1983 Reunion Committees would like to remind everyone that March 31 is just around the corner. Those who have not purchased event tickets are reminded to purchase one on or before March 31, 2008 to avoid paying an extra \$5 at the door.

Contact any of the Steering Committee Members for details: Tonnie Camacho at 483-9665; Viola Kaipat at 483-0214; Ed Camacho at 483-5262; Jane Tudela at 234-9571; Frances Mildred Cruz at 483-0995; Ester Teregoyo at 236-9777; Ben Sablan at 287-1480; or Diego Songsong at 287-4300. (PR)

Covenant Day Debate tomorrow

The NMI Council for the Humanities invites the public to attend the 6th Annual Covenant Day Debate tomorrow, March 26, 6:30pm at the Visitors Center Theater of American Memorial Park. Admission is free of charge.

The debate is an annual event that promotes research, critical thinking and debating skills and encourages junior high and high school students to examine key Covenant-related issues that affect life in the Commonwealth.

The Covenant is the political document that establishes the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and its unique relationship with the United States.

This year's competition will be in a town hall format featuring two finalists each competing in a junior division and a senior division. They will debate the pros and cons of permitting non-U.S. citizens to serve on Commonwealth juries.

Judges for the event include Jane Mack, former judge Edward Manibusan and Nhing Reyes. Patricia B. Coleman will serve as moderator. Contact Council staff at 235-4785 for additional details about this event.

The Council sponsors this event each year, in conjunction with the National Forensic League and Middle School Forensic League. (PR)



Saturday, April 5, 2008

Marianas Country Club

Show Time 6:30 a.m. / Shotgun Start 7:30 a.m.

Entry forms: Available at Marianas Country Club, Century Hotel and HANMI members.

Tournament Fee: \$99.00 / \$110 after April 1 inclusive of Green Fee, Prizes, Awards, Banquet

Maximum entries: 144 players

Additional banquet guests \$20 per person

PRIZES

CHAMPIONSHIP, SENIORS, A, B & C FLIGHTS

First Place:	\$500.00 plus trophy
Second Place:	\$300.00 plus trophy
Third Place:	\$200.00 plus trophy
Ladies Double Peoria : 1st	\$500.00 plus trophy
2nd	\$300.00 plus trophy
3rd	\$200.00 plus trophy

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Ladies

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Chung Nam (C/O Mr. Jae)	JSTA	Saipan World Resort
Coral Ocean Point Resort	Kautz Glass	Takagi & Associates
DFS	Marianas Resort	Tan Holdings
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Opinion

Saipan Tribune

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EDITORIAL

The world still cares

United Nations special envoy Ibrahim Gambari just returned from Myanmar. It was his third visit since the Saffron Revolution—in which the government imprisoned, tortured and slaughtered hundreds of its citizens who were engaged in peaceful protests—and his first since Myanmar—also known as Burma—announced a referendum on its faux-democratic constitution. World leaders had hoped this visit, delayed by Burma for months, might at last convince the regime to make its “road map to democracy” more democratic. They were wrong.

After months of delays, Gambari was granted a visa after the junta announced it had already scheduled the referendum for this May and elections for 2010, both of which serve to falsely legitimize the current military dictatorship. His suggestions for creating a more inclusive constitution and referendum, for allowing international observers during the referendum, and for releasing 1,900 political prisoners were all thoroughly rebuffed. Yes, Gambari was allowed to meet with Nobel laureate and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is under house arrest. But he was denied meetings with the senior leadership, which further snubbed the United Nations by meeting with Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej just a few days later. (Samak’s takeaway from that meeting: Burma’s brutal leaders “meditate,” just as good Buddhists should. He declared this after signing a lucrative investment pact.)

The junta needs to know that the world still cares about the fate of the abused Burmese people. One way to convey this message would be to extend targeted banking sanctions against the Burmese leadership and state-owned companies, an action that the United States pioneered but has been slow to fully roll out, and that the European Union has been reluctant to take at all; to impose arms embargoes; and to urge countries such as China that are cozy with Burma to pressure the junta into true reform. Of course, China has been reluctant to “meddle” in another country’s “internal affairs”—especially when those “internal affairs” involve a violent crackdown on pro-democracy protests led by monks. Still, well before the recent uprising in Tibet, China allowed a U.N. Security Council presidential statement last October that outlined elements for Burmese human rights reforms and “national reconciliation.” China should recognize, then, that Myanmar’s continued destruction of its own people means the junta is defying not only the West but its Asian allies as well.



A crude case for war?

By STEVEN MUFSON
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It’s hard to miss the point of the “Blood for Oil” Web site. It features one poster of an American flag with “Blood for oil?” in white block letters where the stars should be and two dripping red handprints across the stripes. Another shows a photo of President Bush with a thin black line on his upper lip. “Got oil?” the headline asks wryly.

Five years after the United States invaded Iraq, plenty of people believe that the war was waged chiefly to secure U.S. petroleum supplies and to make Iraq safe—and lucrative—for the U.S. oil industry.

We may not know the real motivations behind the Iraq war for years, but it remains difficult to distill oil from all the possibilities. That’s because our society and economy have been nursed on cheap oil, and the idea that oil security is a right as well as a necessity has become part of our foreign policy DNA, handed down from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Jimmy Carter to George H.W. Bush. And the

from \$40 billion to \$121 billion over the same period. While the United States has rid itself of Saddam Hussein and whatever threat he might have posed, oil revenues have filled the treasuries of petro-autocrats in Iran, Venezuela and Russia, emboldening those regimes and complicating U.S. diplomacy in new ways.

American consumers are paying for this turmoil at the pump. If the overthrow of Saddam was supposed to be a silver bullet for the American consumer, it turned out to be one that ricocheted and tore a hole through his wallet.

“If we went to war for oil, we did it as clumsily as anyone could do. And we spent more on the war than we could ever conceivably have gotten out of Iraq’s oil fields even if we had particular control over them,” says Anthony Cordesman, an expert on U.S. strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies who rejects the idea that the war was designed on behalf of oil companies.

But that doesn’t mean that oil had nothing to do with the invasion. In his recent memoir, former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan said: “I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: The Iraq war is

**American consumers are paying for this turmoil at the pump.
If the overthrow of Saddam was supposed to be a silver bullet for
the American consumer, it turned out to be one that ricocheted and
tore a hole through his wallet.**

war and its untidy aftermath have, in fact, swelled the coffers of the world’s biggest oil companies.

But it hasn’t happened in the way anyone might have imagined. Instead of making Iraq an open economy fueled by a thriving oil sector, the war has failed to boost the flow of oil from Iraq’s giant well-mapped reservoirs, which oil experts say could rival Saudi Arabia’s and produce 6 million barrels a day, if not more. Thanks to insurgents’ sabotage of pipelines and pumping stations, and foreign companies’ fears about safety and contract risks in Iraq, the country is still struggling in vain to raise oil output to its prewar levels of about 2.5 million barrels a day.

As it turns out, that has kept oil off the international market at just the moment when the world desperately needs a cushion of supplies to keep prices down. Demand from China is booming, and political strife has limited oil production in Nigeria and Venezuela.

In the absence of Iraqi supplies, prices have soared three-and-a-half-fold since the U.S. invasion on March 20, 2003. (Last week, they shattered all previous records, even after adjusting for inflation.) The profits of the five biggest Western oil companies have jumped

largely about oil.”

Says Cordesman: “To say that we would have taken the same steps against a dictator in Africa or Burma as we took in Iraq is to ignore the strategic realities that drove American behavior.”

There is no single conspiracy theory about why the Bush administration allegedly waged this “war for oil.” Here are two.

Version one: Bush, former Texas oilman, and Vice President Dick Cheney, former chief executive of the contracting and oil-services firm Halliburton, wanted to help their friends in the oil world. They sought to install a pro-Western government that would invite the major oil companies back into Iraq. “Exxon was in the kitchen with Dick Cheney when the Iraq war was being cooked up,” says the Web site of a group called Consumers for Peace.

Version two: As laid out in an April 2003 article in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, “The war against Saddam is about guaranteeing American hegemony rather than about increasing the profits of Exxon.” Yahya Sadowski, an associate professor at the American University of Beirut, argues that “the neo-conservative cabal”

See A CRUDE on next page

EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Letter to the Editor

Nonsense and common sense

The “nonsense” letter about me is truly deserving of some common sense. But first, I want to thank the author (whom I believe is a ghost writer) for creating the opportunity to share what I teach and a little common sense.

The author needs to know that KHS’s Social Studies Department is the only high school with their students on target to meet the 2010 goal for SAT scores to be equal with our counterparts on the mainland and this was accomplished under my leadership as the Social Studies chair. We all teach to address the Standards & Benchmarks of PSS and the expectations of the SAT exam, which extends to all the communication skills of reading,

writing, listening and speaking and the cognitive skills of critical and analytical thinking. I teach the sciences of anthropology, archeology, sociology, geology, political science (basic government), economics, and the use of geographic tools. It is total nonsense to accuse me of teaching about hip-hop in the context of teaching these sciences and art. But I can assure the author that every child that finishes one of my classes has been affected in a positive way academically, morally and socially. It’s obvious the author didn’t have the common sense to come and see my classroom or see me teach before making his nonsense assertions that were based on one poster.

As for the “hip hop culture figures in my classroom,” that is the only thing the author was right about. The “nonsense letter” was all about the obvious assumptions the author made because he may have heard about a poster in my classroom, as he lives in CK, not Kagman. FYI, the poster features my niece, who is a rapper with a positive message. My family members have a 32-track studio in the basement of my home in the States and I wanted to share that with the students because they do relate to rap. I knew the kids could relate to her and would appreciate the poster, which is probably how the author heard about it. The poster was not about promoting the hip-hop culture

but my niece. Furthermore, if you know anything about NMI history, the Chamorro culture has gone from wearing no clothing to FUBU, which is hip-hop culture attire. It’s too bad the author is so concerned about hip-hop culture now because it is way too late to stop the spread of hip-hop and I had nothing to do with it. So the nonsense author can stop hating and even come and spend some time in my classroom because it’s obvious he or whoever wrote the letter is full of nonsense about hip-hop being taught in my classroom.

Ambrose M. Bennett
Kagman, Saipan

A CRUDE

From Page 10

had a “grand plan” to ramp up Iraqi production, “flood the world market with Iraqi oil” and drive the price down to \$15 a barrel. That would stimulate the U.S. economy, “finally destroy” OPEC, wreck the economies of “rogue states” such as Iran and Venezuela, and “create more opportunities for ‘regime change.’”

There are historical roots for all this suspicion. After World War I, the Western powers carved up oil-producing interests in the Middle East. In Iraq, the French were given about a quarter of the national consortium, and the U.S. government pressured its allies to turn over an equal share to a handful of American companies.

Even now, the fate of Iraq’s concessions is laden with politics. Russia’s Lukoil hopes to regain access to a giant field. China is seeking new fields. The big U.S. firms are angling to return to fields they ran before sanctions barred them during the 1990s. Smaller U.S., Turkish, European and Korean firms are gambling on new exploration deals with the autonomous Kurdish regional authority despite threats from Baghdad.

“One can imagine Iraq’s oil fields as a pimple waiting to be pricked,” says Antonia Juhasz, author of *The Bush Agenda: Invading the World, One Economy at a Time*. She notes that the Bush administration put former oil executives on the reconstruction team, hired the Virginia consulting firm BearingPoint to write a framework for Iraq’s oil industry, picked the Iraqis who took key oil ministry posts and has pressured Iraq to adopt a petroleum law favorable to international companies.

The petroleum law has become a rallying point for critics who say that the war was about oil. It would allow long-term production-sharing agreements, which Juhasz says are only used in 12 percent of the world “and only where the country needs to entice the companies to come.” Defenders of the law, including exiled Iraqi oil experts, say that it provides for different types of contracts; how generous they are will depend on how well they are negotiated, but the law sets minimum conditions.

Greg Muttitt, another widely quoted war critic, who works for Platform London, a group of British environmentalists, human rights campaigners, artists and activists, says that an occupied country can’t negotiate freely. What ended up in the proposed petroleum law, he says, was “pretty close” to



Two posters from the “Blood for Oil” Web site show a photo of President Bush in smoke above an oil field, left, and a war-peace gas gauge. Five years after the United States invaded Iraq, many people believe the war was waged chiefly to secure U.S. petroleum supplies and to make Iraq safe for the U.S. oil industry.

what was in papers drafted by the State Department before the invasion. “Perhaps not surprising,” he adds, given lobbying by U.S. officials and the role of former oil company executives in the reconstruction hierarchy.

That’s the theory. The problem is: The petroleum law has not been adopted.

The idea that the Bush administration was in the tank for the oil industry glosses over a story of conflicting views before the U.S. invasion and the bungled execution of plans afterwards. There were two rival interagency policy groups before the war, one led by the Pentagon and one by the State Department. Some key differences were never resolved. Some Pentagon planners wanted Iraq to maximize oil output, while State worried that a flood of Iraqi oil could threaten Saudi interests and market share.

The notion of an oil war also conjures up an image of a swashbuckling, string-pulling oil industry that no longer reflects a business that in many ways has become cautious and fearful of political turmoil. Western oil interests did encourage the overthrow of Iranian leader Mohammed Mossadegh in the early 1950s and the war in Suez in 1956. But generally oil companies are content to forge alliances of convenience with leaders as diverse as Saudi kings, Angolan com-

munists and Indonesia’s late, long-time autocrat Suharto as long as they’re predictable. On those leaders’ politics, human rights record, ethnicity or religion, oil giants are agnostic.

“Companies don’t like and won’t make investments where there’s uncertainty, and war is the biggest uncertainty of all,” said Rob McKee, the former number two executive at ConocoPhillips and a former top U.S. official overseeing Iraq’s oil sector. “On the other hand, companies were hoping that Iraq would open up, and as long as Saddam was there, Iraq couldn’t. ... From that point of view, maybe they were happy that there would be a change.”

Still, the big firms had trepidations. In a conversation with an adviser shortly before the invasion, the chief executive of one of the five major oil companies described what he would say if asked to invest billions of dollars in Iraq after the war: Tell me about the contract system, arbitration, physical security and social cohesion, then we’ll decide.

Five years later, they still haven’t decided, and physical security is so tenuous that the oil giants are still declining Iraqi invitations to send their employees to inspect existing fields.

This wasn’t what Bush administration planners had expected.

Leading administration officials expected a postwar Iraq to reclaim its for-

mer position among oil exporters. “We are dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction and relatively soon,” then-Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz told Congress just after the invasion, predicting that oil would generate \$50 billion to \$100 billion in revenues within two to three years. Ironically, Iraq might approach that figure this year because of high prices, not higher production.

Prewar planning settled who would oversee Iraq’s oil sector. The Pentagon picked Phil Carroll, a well-respected former top executive at Royal Dutch Shell, who was succeeded by McKee. War critics point to such industry ties as evidence of nefarious influence, but former administration members say the choices were made on the basis of expertise.

“If you wanted to get someone to help run an oil industry, who would you choose?” asked one person involved in selecting Carroll. “A broker on an exchange? An environmental expert? Or the head of an oil company?”

The controversial details were all part of the larger strategic picture. “When we first decided on the war, I don’t remember oil playing an important part,” says Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser under the elder Bush and a critic of the current president’s decision to invade.

But that’s because concern about oil

supplies is part of the architecture of U.S. foreign policy. Scowcroft notes that oil can’t be disregarded because Iraq and its neighbors sit on two-thirds of the world’s oil reserves. But oil needn’t be mentioned either because it’s self-evident. War critics might call that the perfect conspiracy.

In a sense, though, all Americans are part of that conspiracy. We have built a society that is profligate with its energy and relies on petroleum that happens to be pooled under some unstable or unfriendly regimes. We have frittered away energy resources with little regard for the strategic consequences. And now it’s hard and expensive to change our ways.

Zaab Sethna, a business consultant and former official of the Iraqi National Congress, says that he attended many Pentagon and State Department meetings and never heard postwar oil policy discussed.

But, he says, “Let’s not kid ourselves. Iraq is sitting on a very large portion of oil itself and is in a key region of the world. And that makes it important for U.S. security interests. ... The Iraqi opposition ... realized that Rwanda wouldn’t be getting the attention of the superpower.”

Until Rwanda discovers oil.

Mufson covers energy for The Post.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲84° ▼75°	▲85° ▼74°	▲84° ▼75°	▲85° ▼75°	▲85° ▼75°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲88 ▼74
Palau	T>Showers	▲87 ▼77
Yap	Partly Sunny	▲87 ▼76
Chuuk	Partly Sunny	▲89 ▼78
Pohnpei	Cloudy	▲88 ▼77
Kosrae	Partly Sunny	▲89 ▼77
Majuro	T>Showers	▲88 ▼79

Around The Globe

Auckland	Cloudy	▲75 ▼57
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	▲57 ▼36
Hong Kong	Showers	▲72 ▼66
Honolulu	Partly Sunny	▲83 ▼71
London	Mostly Cloudy	▲43 ▼41
Los Angeles	Cloudy	▲74 ▼55
Manila	Cloudy	▲91 ▼75
Melbourne	Mostly Cloudy	▲75 ▼54
Miami	Partly Sunny	▲75 ▼64
New York	Partly Sunny	▲46 ▼40
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	▲58 ▼40
Paris	Rain/Snow	▲41 ▼39
Pusan	Cloudy	▲53 ▼36
Rome	Rain/Snow	▲51 ▼41
Salem	Rain	▲50 ▼39
San Francisco	Mostly Cloudy	▲63 ▼49
Seoul	Partly Sunny	▲46 ▼36
Tokyo	Sunny	▲65 ▼44
Washington, DC	Partly Sunny	▲56 ▼40

Tides

Saipan Harbor		Sunrise/Sunset		Moonrise/Moonset	
3:48AM Today	Low Tide: 0.9 Feet	Today	6:18AM	6:29PM	Today 9:20PM 8:49AM*
9:07AM Today	High Tide: 1.8 Feet	Wednesday	6:17AM	6:29PM	Wednesday 10:11PM 9:33AM*
4:10PM Today	Low Tide: 0.1 Feet	Thursday	6:16AM	6:29PM	Thursday 11:04PM 10:22AM*
10:40PM Today	High Tide: 1.7 Feet	Friday	6:15AM	6:29PM	Friday 11:56PM** 11:13AM*
		Saturday	6:15AM	6:29PM	Saturday 11:56PM** 11:13AM

*Following Day **Preceding Day

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Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.

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A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.

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Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.

■ SAMUT SARI

Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.

■ TRAVELOGUE

Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

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Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.

■ CAMPUS BULLETIN

Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

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- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

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- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MARCH 16, 2008

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Rota

CO 9313 8:30am 9:05am 3,4,7

Saipan-Guam

CO 9317 4:00am 4:50am Daily

CO 9597 8:30am 9:20am 1,2,5,6

CO 9313 8:30am 10:00am 3,4,7 via Rota

CO 9601 12:30pm 1:20pm Daily

CO 9603 3:30pm 4:20pm Daily

CO 9605 6:30pm 7:20pm Daily

CO 9599 9:30pm 10:20pm Daily

Saipan-Narita

NW 078 8:25am 1:30pm Daily via Nagoya

NW 075 4:50pm 7:30pm Daily Nagoya

Saipan-Osaka

NW 083 4:20pm 7:10pm Daily

Saipan-Nagoya

NW 078 8:40am 11:25am Daily

Saipan-Manila

CO 895 4:45pm 6:35pm 6

CO 895 6:45pm 8:35pm 3

Saipan-Seoul

OZ 604 2:10am 6:00am 1

OZ 604 2:40am 6:30am 2,3,4,5,6,7

OZ 606 3:30pm 7:00pm 2,4,6,7

Saipan-Busan

OZ 608 4:00am 7:35am 1,4,5,7

Saipan-Guangzhou

CZ 3008 5:00am 8:00am 2,6

Guam-Manila

CO 891 6:00am 10:30am 3 via Yap

and Koror

CO 893 6:30am 8:05am 6

CO 893 8:25am 10:00am 2,7

CO 893 5:50pm 9:10pm 5 via Koror

CO 933 7:00pm 8:40pm Daily

PR 111 6:00am 7:45am 1,2,4,6,7

Guam-Hongkong

CO 909 6:50pm 9:35pm 1,5

Guam-Rota

CO 9598 10:15am 10:45am 1,2,6

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; PR: Philippine Airlines; CZ: China Southern; CA: Air China; NW: Northwest; JO: Japan Airlines; OZ: Asiana; MU: China Eastern
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The *Saipan Tribune* is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline ETD ETA Frequency

Guam-Rota

FRE 113 11:40am 11:50am Daily

FRE 115 1:00pm 1:10pm Daily

FRE 117 2:30pm 2:40pm Daily

FRE 119 4:00pm 4:10pm Daily

FRE 121 4:40pm 4:50pm Daily

FRE 123 * 5:40pm 5:50pm Daily

FRE 125 * 6:00pm 6:10pm Daily

Rota-Saipan

FRE 300 4:00pm 4:30pm Daily

FRE 300 4:50pm 5:25pm Daily

Saipan-Rota

FRE 400 6:00pm 6:30pm Daily

Business

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Iraq plans oil, gas development projects

BAGHDAD (AP)—Iraq's Oil Ministry said Sunday that it has invited local and international oil companies to bid for contracts including one to develop a natural gas field in a Sunni area in the western part of the country. The ministry has set a deadline of April 24 for companies to submit detailed plans to help develop the Akkas gas field, located in the former Sunni insurgent stronghold of Anbar province, the ministry said on its Web site. The Akkas field has estimated reserves of more than 2.15 trillion cubic feet.

Metro One to shut call centers, cut jobs

PORLTAND, Ore. (AP)—Metro One Telecommunications Inc. will exit the wholesale directory assistance business by May 5, resulting in the closing of call centers and the elimination of about 600 positions. The Portland-based company said it will close or sell call centers, where it handled incoming information calls for telecommunications companies, in Minneapolis; Charlotte, N.C.; Orlando, Fla.; and Honolulu in addition to its recently closed call centers in Long Island, N.Y., and Portland. It also will reduce corporate staff at its Portland headquarters. About 600 call center and related positions will be eliminated, and staff will be provided severance packages, Metro One said in a statement dated Friday.

High gas prices aid prop-plane comeback

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP)—As fuel prices soar to record highs and airlines struggle to maintain profitability, the unglamorous but fuel-efficient turboprop regional airliner is making a remarkable comeback. The revival of the propeller-driven planes—which typically consume a quarter to a third less fuel than equivalent jets—marks a significant new trend in the industry. Until recently, many commuter airlines had been determined to consign the planes to history and convert to all-jet fleets which offer greater passenger comfort. The world's remaining manufacturers of turboprops for commuter airlines, Canada's Bombardier and France's ATR, have ramped up production to 140 of the planes this year, after making 100 deliveries in 2007. This compares with only 26 in 2002.

Health insurers limit advanced scans

TRENTON, N.J. (AP)—Insurance companies are taking a harder look at advanced medical scans like CT and PET scans, citing spiraling costs and safety concerns. And some doctors agree there's emerging evidence that these scans are being overprescribed.

"Costs are soaring in this area, quality concerns are mounting and safety concerns are mounting," said Karen Ignagni, chief executive officer of the trade group America's Health Insurance Plan.

Health insurers are requiring more pre-authorizations before patients can receive these scans, and setting other restrictions including mandating that the imaging equipment and medical staff operating it be credentialed in advance.

Insurers fear some patients

are being exposed to dangerous radiation levels from having repeated CT and PET scans, which use many times the radiation of a regular chest X-ray. Sometimes scans are repeated because the first ones were not done properly, using outdated equipment or by poorly trained technicians.

Doctors, too, are concerned about patients getting excessive radiation exposure when they receive scans that aren't needed or are ordered as "defensive medicine" to protect against possible lawsuits. There also is concern that a small number of unscrupulous doctors without adequate expertise are referring patients for tests in their own offices or imaging facilities in which they have a financial interest.

"There is a definite concern

that in-office imaging could lead to scanning for dollars," said Dr. Robert Hendel, a heart specialist who sits on American College of Cardiology panels focused on quality and appropriateness of imaging.

But doctor experts say the bigger problem with medical

imaging tests is the insurance red tape needed to get them.

"Is this a preauthorization process or are these (insurance) companies practicing medicine?" asks Dr. Arl Van Moore, board chairman at the American College of Radiology, the specialists in medical imaging.

Moore cited another reason for increasing costs: Doctors sometimes order a diagnostic test that doesn't need preauthorization—even if it provides less helpful information than the one they prefer—then seek approval for a more advanced test if the first one shows it's needed.

Investors await housing, spending data

NEW YORK (AP)—Few investors expect this week's readings on the housing market and personal spending to be especially strong. But many are hoping the data shows at least a few clues that an economic rebound is on the horizon.

More than six months have passed since the Federal Reserve started lowering interest rates; usually, this is the point when there's evidence that a rate cut is having a salutary effect on the broader economy.

Last week, Wall Street finished sharply higher, encouraged by the Fed's moves as well as better-

than-expected quarterly results from Lehman, Goldman and Morgan Stanley. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 3.43 percent, the Standard & Poor's 500 index increased 3.21 percent, and the Nasdaq composite index added 2.06 percent.

This week brings a slew of data, which analysts do not predict will show much recovery. And meanwhile, Wall Street will have to keep an eye on commodities prices; crude oil and gold have retreated from record levels, leaving potential room for further rate cuts, but could certainly surge again.



High gas prices are seen posted at a Shell gas station in Menlo Park, Calif., Thursday, March 13, 2008.

Lundberg Survey: Gas prices rise 7 cents

CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP)—A survey says the national average price for gasoline rose 7 cents over the last two weeks.

The average price of self-serve regular gasoline on Friday was \$3.26 a gallon, mid-grade was \$3.38 and premium was \$3.50. That's all

according to the Lundberg Survey of 7,000 stations nationwide released Sunday.

Of the cities surveyed, the cheapest price was in Newark, N.J., where a gallon of regular cost \$3.03, on average. The highest average price was in San Francisco at \$3.66.



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Nation

Fishing boat sinks off Alaska; 4 dead

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP)—Four crew members died Sunday and another was missing after a Seattle-based fishing boat sank in high seas off Alaska's Aleutian Islands, the Coast Guard said.

The dead were among 47 crew members who abandoned ship after the 184-foot Alaska Ranger developed problems. Forty-two crew members were recovered safely, but a search was continuing for the missing person, said Chief Petty Officer Barry Lane.

The vessel started taking on water shortly before 3 a.m. after losing control of its rudder 120 miles west of Dutch Harbor, which is on Unalaska Island. Seas with up to 8-foot waves and 25-knot winds were reported at the time of the sinking, Lane said. The Coast Guard is investigating the cause of the accident, he said.

State environmental regulators were notified that the ship

was carrying 145,000 gallons of diesel when it sank in deep seas, according to Leslie Pearson, emergency response manager for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

An oil sheen covered an area of a quarter mile by a half mile, Coast Guard spokesman Ray Dwyer said. Because of the strong winds, however, any cleanup effort is unlikely, although those conditions would disperse a spill much more quickly than calm weather, Pearson said.

Some of those on board the Alaska Ranger were heading to Dutch Harbor in a Coast Guard cutter and the sunken vessel's sister ship, the Alaska Warrior.

The vessel took part in the rescue operation along with two Coast Guard helicopters that were used to pluck crew members from life rafts, Lane said.

Other survivors were on

board the Coast Guard cutter Munro, which remained at the scene to search for the missing crew member. Lane said the names of the dead would not be released until their next of kin had been notified.

A C-130 also remained to help search for the missing crew member.

Coast Guard Lt. Eric Eggan said it was unknown how or when the four died. The identities of the dead were unknown.

Chuck Harvey, a harbor officer on duty in Dutch Harbor, said his office was notified by the Coast Guard to clear a dock for its arrival, expected around 11 p.m. EDT Sunday.

The Coast Guard also told harbor officials to have an ambulance ready, but didn't specify the degree or nature of any injuries, Harvey said.

"I figure there's quite a bit of hypothermia going on," he said.



The Alaska Ranger is seen at a port in Dutch Harbor, Jan. 2006.

AP

Fire, explosions destroy Ark. meat plant

BOONEVILLE, Ark. (AP)—A fire set off a series of explosions at a meat packing plant on Sunday, destroying the factory and causing an ammonia gas leak that forced 180 people from their homes, authorities said. There were no reported injuries.

The fire started in a freezer section of the Cargill Meat Solutions plant in this western Arkansas town of 4,000 residents, said Logan County emergency manager Don Fairbanks.

Workers "were doing some welding on some fans," Fairbanks said. "The welders had put their equipment up and turned around and there was a fire."

Authorities said dispatchers received the first emergency call about the fire at about 1 p.m. Sunday, and at least one fire could still be seen burning Sunday night.

"The entire facility is gone," said Tonya Roberts, a spokeswoman for the emergency response effort.

The Cargill Inc.-owned plant, which employs about 800 people and produces more than 2 million pounds of ground beef and steak per week, is the town's largest employer, according to the Booneville Chamber of Commerce.

Lori Hayes, a human resources manager for the plant, said corporate officials would come to the plant in the coming days to assess the damage. She said it was too early to say whether the plant would be rebuilt.

"We are asking all employees not to show up tomorrow," Hayes said.

Mark Klein, a spokesman for Minneapolis-based Cargill Inc., said the plant is closed Sundays but that about 20 contractors and a few other employees were at the site at the time of the fire.



This image provided by Mark Stephens via KFSM5News shows a meat packing plant explosion that forced 180 people from their homes on Easter Sunday March 23, 2008 in Booneville, Ark.

ACROSS THE NATION

Pre-collapse photos show bends on bridge

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Old photos of the Interstate 35W bridge show two steel connecting plates were visibly bent as early as 2003—four years before the span collapsed into the Mississippi River, killing 13 people. Minnesota Department of Transportation officials declined to say when the state first knew about the bending in the pieces of steel, called gusset plates. Two photos, part of a report issued earlier this month by the National Transportation Safety Board, reveal slight bends in gusset plates that hold beams together at two separate connecting points. The plates are in areas believed to be among the first points of failure when the span collapsed.

Probe into Detroit mayor nearly done

DETROIT (AP)—A prosecutor poised to reveal the results of her probe into whether Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick and his former top aide committed perjury or other crimes insists her own re-election bid did not affect the investigation. On Monday, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy will put an end to two months of speculation when she announces what she found in her independent review of a text-messaging sex scandal that has consumed the city. "We're not the ones that created this scenario," Worthy said Friday. "We are the ones who simply want to do the right thing and do a thorough job."

No bitterness after wrongly imprisoned

LOS ANGELES (AP)—For more than two decades behind bars, Willie Earl Green worked hard on his education, married his pen pal and never stopped trying to prove he was innocent in the execution-style murder of a single mother. The sole prosecution witness came forward four years ago, saying he wasn't sure he had identified the right man. Last week, a judge tossed out Green's conviction. Even though he spent nearly half of his life in prison, the 56-year-old, soft-spoken man is at peace with himself. "I was wrongly accused, I'm out now, I'm not bitter, I'm happy," Green said as he left the courthouse. Green, a former chauffeur from Canton, Miss., said he was proud of his achievements in prison, including earning an associates degree and teaching math to fellow inmates at San Quentin.

Police in rising arms race with crooks

BOISE, Idaho (AP)—Some jurisdictions across the U.S. have been arming rank-and-file officers with high-powered assault rifles for a decade or more. But law enforcement officials say that trend has accelerated in the last year because of greater numbers of shootouts, standoffs in which police were outgunned, rising officer deaths and mass shootings of civilians by heavily armed gunmen. "If you get into a fire fight, you want to be the winner," said Scott Knight, police chief of Chaska, Minn., and chairman of the firearms committee for the International Association of Chiefs of Police. "Our departments are moving to those weapons out of necessity across the country." Last year, Miami Police Chief John Timoney authorized his patrol officers to carry AR-15s because of a rise in assault rifle use by criminals.

Forecasters warn of flooding in Ark.

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP)—High water pouring down the White River could cause historic flooding in cities along its path in eastern Arkansas, forecasters warned Sunday.

The river, one of many out of its banks across wide areas of the Midwest, could top levels recorded in a devastating flood 25 years ago, National Weather Service meteorologist John Robinson wrote in an e-mail to reporters Sunday.

A tributary of the White River,

the Black River, ruptured a levee in two places Saturday near Pocahontas, said Renee Preslar, a spokeswoman for the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management. That stream has

been bloated by water pouring downstream from hard-hit southeastern Missouri.

Preslar said the levee breaks allowed flooding in outlying areas but she did not have details on what might have been damaged.

The Army Corps of Engineers worked through the night to plug the breaks with sandbags, and that work appeared to be holding as of Sunday afternoon, Preslar said.

Mother fights Army over son's death

WAUSAU, Wis. (AP)—Joan McDonald believes her son was a casualty of the war in Iraq, but the Army says that while he did suffer a severe head wound in a bomb blast, the cause of his death is undetermined, keeping him off the casualty list.

She and her family are demanding more answers in the death of Sgt. James W. McDonald. After treatment in Germany, McDonald returned to Fort Hood and underwent extensive

"I don't want it to be an undetermined cause of death," said Joan McDonald. "That is ridiculous."

McDonald, 26, was injured in a roadside bomb blast in Iraq last May. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment based at Fort Hood, Texas. After treatment in Germany, McDonald returned to Fort Hood and underwent extensive

facial surgery in August.

His body was found in his barracks apartment Nov. 12, a Monday. He was last seen alive the previous Friday.

The Army ruled out suicide and accidental factors, but an autopsy could not determine the exact cause of death, in part because of the decomposition of the body, said Col. Diane Battaglia, a base spokeswoman.

Asia

More than 40 dead in Afghan violence



PRAYING DOG

One-and-a-half-year old Chihuahua dog "Conan" prays with his owner and chief priest Joei Yoshikuni during a morning pray at the Shuri-Kannondo temple in Okinawa islands, southwestern Japan, Monday, March 24, 2008.

Police: 1 dead, 7 hurt in Japan attack

TOKYO (AP)—One person was stabbed to death and at least seven others were hurt by a man who went on a knifing spree Sunday at a shopping mall in eastern Japan, police said.

Chaos broke out after the attacks at the crowded mall, with the sirens of several ambulances blasting through the compound and people frightened by the sight of bleeding victims trying to escape, Japanese media reported.

The incident occurred in the city of Tsuchiura, said Kiyoto Ogata, a police spokesman. At least seven shoppers were injured and an eighth—a 27-year-old man—died as he was rushed to a nearby hospital, he said.

India tests nuclear capable missile

NEW DELHI (AP)—India successfully tested a short-range version of its most powerful nuclear-capable missile Sunday, the defense ministry said.

The Agni-I missile, which can travel up to 435 miles, was test-fired over the Bay of Bengal from Wheeler's Island off India's east coast in the morning, a ministry statement said. The Agni-I can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads.

"The missile had a textbook performance in terms of range, accuracy and lethality," it said.

This missile has been tested several times in the past.

India and neighboring longtime rival Pakistan—which also has nuclear weapons—routinely test-fire missiles. The two countries have fought three

Police arrested the alleged attacker, a 24-year-old jobless man Masahiro Kanagawa who was wanted over the earlier slaying of a 72-year-old man, Ogata said.

The extent of the victims' wounds and the attacker's motive were not immediately known, Ogata said.

Violent crimes are relatively rare in Japan, where most shootings and stabbings are committed by the nation's "yakuza" crime syndicates. Authorities have been concerned about a recent rise in street violence, however.

In December, a man gunned down two people in a southern Japan sports club before killing himself.

No immediate response from Pakistan was available Sunday evening.

India has a variety of missiles including the short-range Prithvi ballistic missile, the medium-range Akash, and the supersonic Brahmos. The Agni missiles are the most powerful.

India last year successfully test-fired the Agni-III, which is capable of carrying nuclear warheads across much of Asia and the Middle East.

New Delhi says it developed its missile program as a deterrent against neighbors China and Pakistan.

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Afghan and NATO forces killed more than 40 insurgents in an air and ground battle in southern Afghanistan, a security official said Sunday.

Separately, two soldiers from the U.S.-led coalition died after hitting a roadside bomb.

Troops seized dozens of weapons—including rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns—after Saturday's battle in Dihrawud, a district in Uruzgan province, the Afghan Defense Ministry said in a statement. It said many militants were killed, including a commander, but provided no figures.

An official at the ministry, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to release details about the battle, put the number of dead

at more than 40.

Also Saturday, U.S.-led coalition troops hit a roadside bomb in Kandahar province as they were conducting a security patrol with Afghan troops, the coalition said in a statement. Two soldiers died, it said, without releasing their nationalities.

In the northern province of Jawzjan, five Afghans working on a de-mining team were killed and eight others were wounded when their truck was attacked by militants, said Kefayat Ullah Ablagh, head of the U.N.-funded Afghan Technical Consultants.

Ablagh said it was the first time demining workers in his company had been attacked by militants since the country's civil war ended in the mid 1990s.

Also, 25 trucks carrying fuel to U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan have been

destroyed in a possible bomb attack on the Pakistani border. Officials say that dozen of people have been injured.

Mohammed Sadiq Khan, a local government official, said that the explosions and blaze occurred on the Pakistani side of the Torkham customs post late Sunday. At least 50 people were injured, eight of them seriously.

Fida Mohammed, the commander of a paramilitary force that helps provide security at the crossing, said authorities suspect the blasts were caused by bombs, but were still investigating. He said 25 trucks carrying fuel to U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan were destroyed.

Fuel tankers headed for U.S. and NATO bases in Afghanistan have been repeatedly targeted by militants close to the Pakistani border.

China blasts Dalai Lama, Pelosi on Tibet

CHENGDU, China (AP)—China accused the Dalai Lama on Sunday of stoking Tibetan unrest to sabotage the Beijing Olympics and also berated House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, saying she is ignoring the truth about Tibet.

This month's violence in Tibet and neighboring provinces has turned into a public relations disaster for China ahead of the August Olympics, which it had been hoping to use to bolster its international image.

The Chinese government said through official media that formerly restive areas were under control and accused the Dalai Lama, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, of trying to harm China's image ahead of the summer games.

"The Dalai clique is scheming to take the Beijing Olympics hostage to force the Chinese government to make concessions to Tibet independence," said the People's Daily, the main mouthpiece of the Communist Party.

The Tibetan spiritual leader called the accusations against him "baseless," asserting that he supported China's hosting of the summer games.

"I always support (that) the Olympics should ... take place in Beijing ... so that more than 1 billion human beings, that means Chinese, they feel proud of it," he said Sunday in New Delhi, India.

Pelosi's visit to the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India, on Friday was the first by a major foreign official since the protests broke out. The Democratic leader said if people don't speak out against China's oppression in Tibet, "we have lost all moral authority to speak on behalf of human rights anywhere in the world."

China's official Xinhua New Agency published commentary Sunday accusing Pelosi of ignoring the violence caused by the Tibetan rioters.

"Human rights police" like Pelosi are habitually bad tempered and ungenerous when it comes to China, refusing to check their facts and find out the truth of the case," it said.

"Her views are like so many other politicians and western media. Beneath the double standards lies their intention to serve the interest groups behind them, who want to contain or smear China," it said.

Pelosi spokesman Drew Hammill said Sunday that Pelosi condemns the Chinese government's crackdown in Tibet and calls on it "to begin a substantive dialogue and to allow journalists and independent monitors into Tibet to find out the truth."

China's reported death toll from the protests in the Tibetan capital Lhasa earlier this month is 22. Tibet's exiled government says 99 Tibetans have been killed.

Xinhua said Sunday that 94 people had been injured in four counties and one city in Gansu province in riots on March 15-16. The report also said 19 rioters had surrendered in Gannan, a prefecture in Gansu, but it did not give any details.

Despite the media restrictions imposed by the Chinese government, some information was leaking out. An American backpacker who traveled to Chengdu, the capital of western Sichuan province, said he had seen soldiers or paramilitary troops in Deqen in northwest Yunnan province, which borders Tibet.

18 Ukrainian sailors trapped underwater in HK

HONG KONG (AP)—Eighteen Ukrainian sailors were trapped underwater Sunday in their capsized tugboat after it collided with a cargo ship in Hong Kong waters, a marine official said.

Hong Kong Director of Marine Dept. Roger Tupper said the sailors were trapped in the ship's hull and could still be alive if they found an air pocket inside the vessel. However, he said rescue divers knocked on the boat and did not hear the sailors signal back.

Divers made nine attempts to rescue the trapped sailors but were hindered by strong currents and poor visibility, the Hong Kong government said in a statement.

Rescuers were trying to move the 264-foot-long Ukrainian boat—which was upside down at a depth of 115 feet—to a shallower spot to ease rescue efforts, Tupper said.

"We have to get the vessel to shallow water to enable divers to have a better environment to operate," he said at a news conference. "That does take time. That's very unfortunate."

The Ukrainian tugboat Neftegaz, which had been traveling from the



Workers on a boat conduct rescue operation at the water where the 80-meter-long (264-foot-long) Ukrainian boat, currently lying upside down at a depth of 35 meters (115 feet) in Hong Kong Sunday, March 23, 2008.

southern Chinese city of Shenzhen to an oil field south of Hong Kong, collided with Chinese-registered cargo ship Yao Hai late Saturday off Hong Kong's outlying island of Lantau, Tupper said.

He said six Ukrainians and a Chinese citizen were rescued from the tugboat.

Tupper said the cause of the accident was not yet known and weather con-

ditions were "reasonable" when it occurred. Neither vessel was overloaded, he said.

All 25 crew members aboard the Chinese cargo ship were rescued, Tupper said.

The cargo ship suffered some damage but did not sink, the government statement said.

World

Iraq: US death toll in war hits 4,000

BAGHDAD (AP)—A roadside bomb killed four U.S. soldiers in Baghdad on Sunday, the military said, pushing the overall American death toll in the five-year war to at least 4,000.

The grim milestone came on the same day that rockets and mortars pounded the U.S.-protected Green Zone, underscoring the fragile security situation and the resilience of both Sunni and Shiite extremist groups despite an overall lull in violence.

A Multi-National Division—Baghdad soldier also was wounded in the roadside bombing, which struck the soldiers' patrol vehicle about 10 p.m. in southern Baghdad, according to a statement.

Identities of those killed were withheld pending notification of relatives.

The 4,000 figure is according to an Associated Press count that includes eight civilians who worked for the Department of Defense.

Last year, the U.S. military deaths spiked along with the Pentagon's "surge"—the arrival of more than 30,000 extra troops trying to regain control of Baghdad and surrounding areas. The mission was generally considered a success, but the cost was evident as soldiers pushed into Sunni insurgent strongholds and challenged Shiite militias.

Military deaths rose above 100 for three consecutive months for the first time during the war: April 2007, 104; May, 126 and June at 101.

The death toll has seesawed since, with 2007 ending as the deadliest year for American troops at 901 deaths. That was 51 more deaths than 2004, the second deadliest year for U.S. soldiers.

The milestones for each 1,000 deaths—while an arbitrary marker—serve to rivet attention on the war and have come during a range of pivotal moments.

When the 1,000th American died in September 2004, the insurgency was gaining steam. The 2,000-death mark came in October 2005 as Iraq voted on a new constitution. The Pentagon announced its 3,000th loss on the last day of 2006—a day after Saddam Hussein was hanged and closing a year marked by rampant sectarian violence.

Marines see a safer Iraq

AL-ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq (AP)—It's four in the morning and the convoy is staged and ready to roll. Today's run has 70 vehicles—50 trucks loaded with food, water and supplies and 20 military escorts, guns mounted and turrets manned.

When it hits the road, the convoy will sprawl six miles long.

The course ahead is a 70-mile stretch of desert highway through the oasis hamlet of Baghadi and out to Haditha Dam, where the Euphrates River meets Lake Qadisiya.

The dam, on the outskirts of a dusty city by the same name of about 78,000, is Iraq's second-largest source of hydroelectricity, and the U.S. Marines' Combat Logistics Battalion 4—CLB 4—has been protecting its lifelines for the past seven months.

Supply routes vary, but today's will be primarily along Bronze, which is a relief to everyone. Bronze is smoother, and in the back of the Marines' new armored vehicle, the much-delayed MRAP, that means a lot less bouncing around.

More important, Bronze is calm.

Though they discover caches every few weeks, the battalion, which deployed to Iraq last summer from the Japanese island of Okinawa, has only been "hit" on three convoys.

In one, an improvised explosive device was run over by the first vehicle, a mineroller. The mineroller, which looks something like a thresher, was demolished. Though the driver was unhurt, the gunner in the next vehicle took a burst of shrapnel to his face and throat.

But he was back out on a convoy the next day.

To date, no one in the battalion has been killed by IEDs. The only death on a convoy since CLB 4 got here was a combat photographer who was shooting a fuel tanker that had careered off the road in an accident. It exploded, and the photographer was enveloped in the flames.

"Routine" is how people describe the convoys now.

And "quiet."

Anbar province, which stretches to the Saudi Arabian, Jordanian and Syrian borders west of Baghdad, had been the heart of the Sunni insurgency and a bastion of al-Qaida in Iraq. But Sunni tribal leaders who were fighting the Americans began in late 2006 to turn on al-Qaida, fed up with its brutality and



U.S. Marines take a break by their vehicles as a supply convoy stops to unload at Combat Outpost Ellis in Iraq on Sunday, Feb. 24, 2008.

austere brand of Islam.

Now the province is one of the safest in Iraq. The troops' mission is to keep it that way.

"We must be doing something right," said Cpl. Colbert Rianda, of Chico, Calif. "You can see the change."

Just getting out of al-Asad, a sprawling airfield built by Saddam Hussein's regime and now known as "Camp Cupcake," seems to take forever.

Lying at the bottom of a canyon and surrounded by a whole lot of nothing, al-Asad Air Base is big enough to support 20,000 troops. It currently holds about 15,000—including thousands of private contractors, from ponytailed KBR truck drivers to Pakistani cooks to a contingent of Ugandans who handle the on-base security.

Al-Asad is big enough to have its own bus system. It has a Burger King, a Pizza Hut, and round-the-clock Internet access. The base store sells Tic Tacs, souvenir T-shirts, iPods.

To the Marines, who take a sort of masochistic pride in roughing it, the extras are almost embarrassing.

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James T. Conway even singled out al-Asad last summer, warning his Marines not to get soft.

"Marines are getting used to living at fixed bases and with more comforts of life than we really need," he said in a speech at the Naval War College in June. "Marines must guard against complacency and the expectation that tomorrow's fight be marked by equally hospitable operating bases."

Even so, life on Camp Cupcake is

a million gallons of fuel and 2 million gallons of water throughout Anbar.

At the sandbagged battalion headquarters, officers are preparing for departure, writing up merit citations and doing the spadework to get all the 900 Marines back to their home stations.

Their building was a shambles when they arrived, with wires stripped from walls that are now covered in a fresh—albeit dust-covered—coat of paint.

"We are definitely leaving this place better than it was when we came," said 1st Lt. Alex Derichemont, CLB 4's adjutant officer.

"The change has been dramatic, even just during the time that we have been here," he said. "It's not bullets flying through the air every day. A lot of the time out here, it's just another day at the office."

■ ■ ■

A normal day at the office means different things to different people, however.

After a brief stop in a dirt-covered parking lot just short of Haditha Dam, today's convoy splits in half and the vehicles that are needed continue on to Combat Outpost Ellis, another couple of hours beyond in a sparsely populated expanse of desert.

Once there, forklift operators swing into action to unload food and other supplies while the drivers and their military escorts gather for lunch.

Surrounded by concrete blast walls and ringed by barbed wire, the chow hall is little more than a shack, dark and drafty.

Around noon, Marines drift in, boots and faces dusty, rifles slung over shoulders. There's no question that these guys are roughing it.

With the wind kicking up outside and whistling through the walls, they line up solemnly in front of the one functioning microwave with their plates of frozen pizza, calzones and Pop Tarts.

If you smoke a particular brand of cigarette, you have to be fast. When the supplies come in, it's first come, first served.

For these troops, going outside the wire is common.

Often with smiling Iraqi children in tow, the Marines frequently patrol the area and liaise with local officials. Their mission is both keep the peace and build up the local infrastructure so that the U.S. can ease out of the region without creating an implosion.

The work is moving ahead, but is far from complete. Signs outside the chow hall remind the troops that the sooner a reliable local justice system is established, the better.

But for 1st Lt. Nicolas Martinez, of Dallas, life is still viewed through the lens of the IEDs.

WORLD BRIEFS

Austria: Hostage-taker deadline passes

VIENNA, Austria (AP)—An ultimatum set by Islamist militants holding two Austrian hostages expired Sunday with no official word from the captors. Austrian authorities said earlier that they believed they had more time to pursue the pair's release. Al-Qaida in Islamic North Africa had given authorities until midnight to release some of

its members in jails in Tunisia and Algeria in exchange for Wolfgang Ebner and Andrea Kloiber. The couple disappeared while on vacation in Tunisia last month. Several hours before the deadline expired, Foreign Ministry spokesman Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal said a crisis management team handling efforts to release the couple had concluded that more time was available to pursue their efforts. The couple's loca-

tion remained unclear. Austrian envoy Anton Prohaska, a former ambassador leading Austria's efforts in the region, has been in the West African nation of Mali for some time.

Pope rejoices over conversions on Easter

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Pope Benedict XVI rejoiced over conversions to Christianity in an Easter Sunday Mass

on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica a day after he baptized a prominent Muslim newspaper editor. The faithful were celebrating their belief in the resurrection of Jesus after he was crucified. Thanks to the apostles' preaching about the resurrection, "thousands and thousands of persons converted to Christianity," Benedict said. "And this is a miracle which renews itself even today," the pope said, hours after

a Saturday night Easter vigil service in which he baptized seven adults. The converts included Magdi Allam, a prominent journalist and commentator in Italy who has received death threats for his denunciations of Islamic fanaticism. Allam, 55, deputy editor of Corriere della Sera newspaper, was born a Muslim in Egypt, but was educated by Catholics and says he has never been a practicing Muslim.

Overdrive

Sturdy cars make it harder for rescuers

CRUISIN'

Corvette Lust

Q: Greg, I'm a lover of Corvettes, and want to know which one is most in demand and collectible? Would it be the first year of 1953?—K.H., Spokane, Wash.

A: Not by a long shot, K.H. We contacted one of the Corvette world's most prominent members, Terry Michaelis of ProTeam Corvettes in Napoleon, Ohio. Here's what he had to say:

"If money is no object, at the top of my Corvette list is the 1963 Corvette Grand Sport, of which only five were ever built. Next would be the 1969 ZL1 all-aluminum 427, of which GM made only two, and then the 1967 L88 427, of which GM made just 20."

The five 1963 Grand Sports he speaks of were conceived by Zora Arkus-Duntov, father of the Corvette, in 1962. These special, lightweight Corvettes were delivered to sports car race teams and driven by top-notch drivers like Dave McDonald, Jim Hall, Hap Sharp, Don Yenko, A.J. Foyt and Roger Penske. Duntov wanted to build 125, but GM pulled the plug after only five were delivered.

Michaelis said that the last 1963 Grand Sport traded hands three years ago for \$4.4 million, and you wouldn't touch it today for less than \$6 million. (For more info, see www.grandsportregistry.com/63_history.htm)

As for price, a 1969 ZL1 all-aluminum 427 Corvette should fetch close to \$4 million, and a 1967 L88 is in the \$1.7 million and up range.

For more available cars, Michaelis recommends the L88s from 1968 and 1969, of which 196 were built.

"Right now, they are bringing \$350,000 to \$750,000. The \$350,000 car is probably a T-top, not a great color, maybe green or yellow or maroon. The popular Corvette colors are red and black. A black convertible just sold for \$675,000."

Write to Greg Zyla in care of King Features Weekly Service, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475, or send an e-mail to gzyla@ptd.net.

By MITCH STACY
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—Capt. Clint Roberts makes his living cutting accident victims out of hideously mangled vehicles, but even he could hardly believe it when two people in a 2007 midsize car survived a head-on crash with a full-sized pickup last year.

The Ford Fusion's reinforced steel construction probably saved the lives of the 18-year-old driver and his 16-year-old passenger. But Roberts said it gave his Hillsborough County Fire Rescue crew fits as they tried to free them last November.

Because hydraulic cutters couldn't shear the roof posts, rescue workers had to turn to heavy-duty electric saws, replacing blade after blade as they dulled on the rugged material.

"It was just beating the snot out of the tools," adding minutes and delaying medical treatment, Roberts said.

There is no question that today's cars save lives by cocooning motorists in reinforced alloys, impact-absorbing crumple zones and as many as a dozen air bags.

But in interviews with The Associated Press, rescue officials and experts from around the United States said the new technology is also hindering extrication of injured people, increasingly forcing crews to work deeper into the critical "golden hour" between accident and treatment by emergency room doctors. On many 2005 and later cars, an extrication that once took 10 or 15 minutes can now take twice that or longer.

To catch up, counties and cities are spending tens of thousands of dollars—if they can afford it—to buy more powerful equipment that can cut through newer cars' reinforced steel and the lighter, tougher exotic metals used in roofs, posts and doors.

Then there are obstacles that endanger rescuers' safety. Pressurized gas canisters that inflate air bags can explode if pierced by cutting tools. Rescuers can be blown from cars when air bags suddenly inflate. Hidden battery cables in hybrid cars can deliver a powerful shock.

To protect themselves, workers now have to peel away the ceiling and interior plastic to see what's underneath before they can even start cutting.

Experts cannot say for certain whether the delays in getting these victims to the hospital have resulted in people dying. But that's the fear.

"We build more fire stations, we make faster fire trucks,



Hillsborough County Fire Dept. Special Operations Technician Phil Broom opens up a car's door during a "Jaws of Life" demonstration, Feb. 28, 2008 in Tampa, Fla. AP

we've got helicopters to get you to the hospital," said Roberts, an expert who teaches extrication to colleagues around Florida. "But what's slowing us down are these vehicles that are harder for us to get into."

The problem has rescue workers scrambling to update their tools and explore different ways to attack cars with their cutters, spreaders and saws. Some agencies with equipment more than a few years old are arriving at accident scenes and finding out that it will no longer do the job.

"Because their shearing materials had been so successful for so many years, some agencies hadn't developed a Plan B," said Tom Hollenstain, who works to educate rescuers about new auto technology at the State Farm Insurance vehicle research center.

Leading hydraulic-tool makers such as Hurst Jaws of Life—whose namesake George Hurst introduced the first hydraulic extrication tools for auto racing in the early 1970s—must keep putting more oomph into their equipment, making it heavier and more expensive. A single Hurst cutter and power unit runs about \$25,000. Add hydraulic spreaders and other tools and

the price rises quickly.

A fire crew in Bonita Springs, Fla., discovered the problem last year when it rolled up on a 2007 Lexus that had overturned. Hydraulic cutters only a few years old wouldn't shear the strengthened steel roof posts, so the crew had to move quickly to cut other parts of

the car. A job that should have taken a few minutes required 20 minutes of cutting and sawing to remove the driver.

Assistant Chief Ken Craft said the incident led the department to buy new heavy rescue tools costing \$54,000—a sizable expense for a city of around 40,000.



Hillsborough County Fire Dept. Special Operations Technician Capt. Jerry Smith, right, removes the car door as Phil Broom surveys the work during a Jaws of Life demonstration in Tampa, Fla., Feb. 28, 2008. AP

"If the automakers roll out something new next year, we could be right back where we were at," Craft said. "That's the problem we're confronted with."

Mike Ader, a volunteer firefighter in Rockville, Md., recalled the layered-steel roof post from a 2008 Toyota Camry that wouldn't budge under the blades of a hydraulic cutter after a broadside crash Jan. 2. The patient, whose injuries were serious but not life-threatening, finally had to be maneuvered around the post.

Ader used two types of saws and numerous blades to remove the post after the patient was removed. The department quickly decided to buy a new, more powerful cutter.

The flip side, of course, is that more people are surviving horrific crashes that would have killed them just a few years ago.

The Fusion's passenger, for example, was hurt but conscious and joking with Roberts as the crew worked to get him out. The driver of the other vehicle—a 2001 Ford F-150 pickup—was dead at the scene.

With about three people hurt in car crashes every minute in the United States, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration spokesman Rae Tyson said he is comfortable with the trade-off. Rescue workers, he said, will have to work harder to keep up with technology, just like everybody else.

"The fatality rate for passenger vehicles is the lowest in history," Tyson said. "That, to me, is a pretty good news story."

One problem for rescue workers is how to get the latest technical information about newer cars and how to deal with them.

Later this year, the nonprofit group COMCARE Emergency Response Alliance, with cooperation from automakers, is introducing a single Web site that will offer schematics and safety specs for most cars on the road. Rescue workers could flip open a laptop computer on the way to a crash scene to find out about the construction of the car, placement of air bag canisters and other details.

Automakers say they are doing more to make safety information available to rescuers and tool makers before new models come out. For instance, Ford is already offering a look at the skeleton of the 2009 F-150 pickup, built with the strongest steel construction the company has ever used.

"We want to facilitate the discussion as much as possible, because we understand the critical nature of their work," Ford spokesman Wesley Sherwood said.

Life & Style

PTI blankets Marianas with Push 2 Talk

Pacific Telecommunications Inc. launched Thursday last week its latest product line, Push 2 Talk, a Marianas-wide radio communication system with cellular, text, and Web-enabled capabilities.

Held at the Tapochao Restaurant on the second floor of the Saipan World Resort, the product launching was attended by officials and representatives of several island companies and the government, as well as several PTI officials and sales associates led by Marketing Manager Kathryn Barry. PTI also gave away several raffle prizes during the launching.

Here are some pictures from that event.



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

PTI enthusiasts Lucky R representatives Armi Cucal and Nina Alvarez with RNV Construction's Michelle Villaraza.



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Guests gather at the Tapochao Restaurant of Saipan World Resort for PTI's launching of their CNMI-wide Push 2 Talk cellphones.



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

R&C Tours' Bertha Sablan and Junichi Somei grace the launching event.



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Saipan Stevedore Co. Inc.'s general manager John Dela Cruz, Rey Magsipoc, Ned Debrum and Carriers Alex Gozon attend the occasion.



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Jay Santos with Customs officers Kimberly Kwon and Dora Sakisat and Kim Forrester grace the event.



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

PTI's Ken Diaz with Office of Adult Probation staff Daisy Mendiola, Neda Camacho and Ursula Lifofoi Aldan.



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

American Memorial Park Ranger's Brian Piercy and Sam Martinsen.



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

NMC's director for institutional advancement Mark Mendiola receives his prize during the raffle draw.



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Ben Lisua, Dwight Aldan, Antonio Bornilla, Hector Sablan and Ed Pangelinan pose for the Saipan Tribune at the Push 2 Talk launch.



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Edward Manglona, Laila Boyer and Elite printing's sales representative Donna Liwag grace PTI's launching of their CNMI-wide Push 2 Talk service.

Illnesses cause 2 more debuts at Met

NEW YORK (AP)—At this rate, the surgeon general could issue a warning that singing at the Metropolitan Opera can be hazardous to one's health.

Illnesses have knocked out stars at dizzying speed, with six singers making unscheduled debuts in leading roles over 13 days.

Three tenors appeared as Tristan, one of whom stopped the show when a set malfunction sent him tumbling into the prompter's box. A soprano took over Isolde in mid-performance, and two other sopranos were thrust into Verdi operas on short notice.

Some singers spend years waiting a chance to sing on the Met's stage, working their way up at regional theaters with the hope they can become the next Luciano Pavarotti or Birgit Nilsson. Various viruses have catapulted those waiting in the wings into the spotlight, usually with not even a single stage rehearsal.

Angela Meade, a 30-year-old soprano still in vocal school, hadn't sung a single professional performance before her debut Friday night as Elvira in Verdi's "Ernani."

A little more than 16 hours later, tenor Robert Dean Smith sang Tristan in a performance simulcast to theaters worldwide. He jetted in from Berlin on Thursday, had a few piano rehearsals Friday and planned to head back to Europe on Sunday. Even Met General Manager Peter Gelb joked that the revival of Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde" was "cursed."

The string of substitute Tristans may end. Ben Heppner, who had been set to star alongside Deborah Voigt in this highly anticipated revival, planned to fly to New York on Sunday night and intends to sing Tuesday and Friday, according to his manager, Bill Guerri. Heppner missed the first four performances because of a blood-borne infection that abscessed in his pelvic region.

Both weekend debuts were warmly received. There's a distinguished list of singers who made unscheduled Met debuts because of illnesses, including by Placido Domingo, Astrid Varnay, Roberta Peters, Cornell MacNeil, Renee Fleming and Salvatore Licitra.

A winner of the 2007 Met National Council Auditions, Meade replaced Sondra Radvanovsky (viral infection) in "Ernani," which before this revival had not been performed at the Met since 1985.

"I was a little nervous the first 15 minutes," Meade said.

No wonder. She enters for the first time to sing her cavatina "Ernani! Ernani, involami," filled with coloratura trills.

Meade, a student at Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts, showed a vibrant voice with nice color and an assured technique. She sang like an old pro from start to finish, combining



AP
Tenor Ben Heppner sings the role of Lohengrin during the final dress rehearsal of Richard Wagner's "Lohengrin," in this April 14, 2006 file photo, at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Heppner, who had been set to star alongside soprano Deborah Voigt in the highly anticipated revival of "Tristan," came down with a blood-borne infection that abscessed in his pelvic region.

for moving duets with Marcello Giordani (Ernani)—she happens to share the same voice teacher as Giordani, Bill Schuman.

Smith, 52, is a far more accomplished singer, gaining international attention when he filled in for Peter Seiffert as Walther von Stolzing in "Die Meistersinger von Nuernberg" at the 1997 Bayreuth Festival. He is the Tristan of choice at Bayreuth these days.

A former baritone, Smith carefully navigated the most difficult of all tenor roles, saving vocal energy for the third-act monologue. Alongside Voigt's huge soprano, his tenor was drowned out a bit during the thickest orchestrations, but he sang with beauty and style throughout, and he benefited from music director James Levine, who adjusts constantly to performers' preferences.

Smith hadn't been on the set before Saturday.

"You count on your experience to get you through," he said.

Born in Kansas and a resident of Switzerland, Smith has performed predominantly in Europe and had been scheduled to make his Met debut in Strauss' "Die Frau ohne Schatten" in December 2009. The Met called Smith on March 14 and asked him to take over for the telecast, and the Staatsoper unter den Linden in Berlin released him from "Tannhaeser" rehearsals, allowing him to fly to New York.

John Mac Master, the original understudy, received negative reviews in the March 10 opener, and Gary Lehman sang the following two performances, emerging following his tumble on March 18 to finish after doctors checked him out.

When Voigt left the stage on March 14 in the second act with a stomach ailment, Janice Baird came in from the bullpen for her Met debut. Then on March 15, soprano Ruth Ann Swenson came down with the flu and was

replaced by Ermonela Jaho as Violetta in Verdi's "La Traviata."

On Saturday, the only glitch was when the night sky turned white for several seconds in the second act.

With his family in his dressing room, Smith was happy he had made the trip.

"Mr. Gelb took a risk. Mr. Levine took a risk," he said. "And I took a risk."

1986 message in bottle drifts 1,735 mi.

SEATTLE (AP)—Merle Brandell and his black lab Slapsey were beachcombing along the Bering Sea when he spied a plastic bottle among the Japanese glass floats he often finds along the shore of his tiny Alaskan fishing village.

He walked over and saw an envelope tucked inside. After slicing the bottle open, Brandell found a message from an elementary school student in a suburb of Seattle. The fact that the letter traveled 1,735 miles without any help from the U.S. postal service is unusual, but that's only the beginning of the mystery.

About 21 years passed between the time Emily Hwaung put the message in a soda bottle and Merle Brandell picked it up on the beach.

"This letter is part of our science project to study oceans and learn about people in distant lands," she wrote. "Please send the date and location of the bottle with your address. I will send you my picture and tell you when and where the bottle was placed in the ocean. Your friend, Emily Hwaung."

Brandell, 34, a bear hunting guide and manager of a local water plant, said many of the 70-plus residents of Nelson Lagoon were intrigued by his find. Beachcombing is a popular activity in remote western Alaska. Among the recent discoveries was a sail boat that washed onto shore last October.

"It's kind of a sport. It keeps us occupied. It's one of the pleasures of living here," Brandell said of the village reachable only by plane or boat that is too small to have its own store.

He had no idea just how unusual his find was until he tried to track down the sender: a fourth grader from the North City School in the Shoreline School District.

No one answered the phone when Brandell called the school in December so he sent the school district a handwritten letter, which even-

tually ended up on the desk of district spokesman Craig Degginger.

After some searching, Degginger discovered Emily Hwaung is now a 30-year-old accountant named Emily Shih who now lives in Seattle. She was in the 4th grade during the 1986-87 school year at a school building that closed more than a year ago.

"I've been getting a kick out of it for a month now," Shih said during a recent interview.

She said she was flabbergasted by the news and immediately shared it with her Kirkland co-workers.

"I don't remember the project. It was so long ago. Elementary school is kind of foggy," Shih admitted.

The project may have been more memorable if each child had created her own message and personally dropped it in the water, but the letters from Carol Aguayo's fourth grade class were typed. The students only added their names and signed them, then a friend carried the bottles on his boat and dropped them in the ocean.

"It took away a little of the mystique," Shih said of the form letter.

She also was a little chagrined by the offer to mail a photo to whomever found the letter and by the environmental implications of dropping plastic bottles in the ocean, and noted that times have changed a lot in 21 years.

"I've had a good laugh about that with all my friends," Shih said.

As she was sharing her story with friends and co-workers, Shih realized how rare it was for a message in a bottle to arrive safely somewhere.

"Many of them had tried to do it themselves, but you never hear of one coming back. The odds are so low that you'll ever hear back from somebody," Shih said. "It was just kind of a once-in-a-lifetime thing."

In Celebration Of Her New Life

Trinidad Arriola Benavente

January 15, 1928 — March 21, 2008

In her new life, she now joins her:

Parents: Ignacio Villagomez & Rita Arriola Benavente

Daughter: Francisca B. Camacho

Reared Grandson: Paul Lee Camacho

Granddaughter: Nadine I. Camacho

Great-Grandson: Patrick D. Ito, Jr.

Sister-In-Law: Magdalena C. Benavente

Niece: Phyllis A. Leuta

She is survived by her Children:

Luis B. and Antonette C. Camacho: Danielle & Matthew, Luis Jr., David, Gabriel & Joshua

Norbert B. and Lisa Camacho: Norbert & Ronna (Kyle), Norma & Steve (Nolan, Nathan & Napua)

Norman & Dora (Reef Jordan) Nadia, Dolores, Michael, Julie & Jason

Rita C. and Vincent R. Cruz (Paula & John (Coloma) Maisie & Michael (Mariana & Malina Rose)

Margarita B. Camacho & Joseph Zillox

Whihelmina C. & Michael Jensen

Bernita B. & Alexander M. Ito: Andrew & Trish (Andrew & Andrei), Fernando (Fernalynn, Remilynn & FernAiden), Therese, Patrick (Kekoa), Margaret (Josiah), Eva & Alexander Jr.

Reared granddaughter: Adrienne C. Villagomez

Brothers, Sisters and In-Laws

Jose A. and Martina K. Benavente & Family, Eleuterio A. Benavente, Dolores B. Camacho & Family, Sr. Veronica A. Benavente, Irminia B. Cox & Family, Maria B. Atalig & Family, Estanislao A. and Abelina Benavente & Family, Luis A. and Susan Benavente & Family

Care Givers

Verginia "Vergi" Castro, Milagros "Aurie" Maranon, and Teresita "Tess" Evangelista

Daily mass is being offered at 6 a.m. at Mt. Carmel Cathedral. Nightly Rosary is being prayed at 7 p.m. at Kristo Rai Church until Wednesday, March 26.

On Thursday, March 27, the Deceased will be taken from CHC at 9:30 a.m. to Mt. Carmel Cathedral and Mass of Christian Burial will follow immediately.

Thank you for your prayers.



'Whos' on first at box office again

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Audiences are still listening to Horton and his Who pals. "Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears a Who," 20th Century Fox's animated adaptation of the beloved children's book, remained the top movie for a second straight weekend with \$25.1 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Featuring the voices of Jim Carrey and Steve Carell, the movie raised its 10-day total to \$85.5 million.

"Horton" fended off a rush of new movies opening over Easter weekend.

Lionsgate's "Tyler Perry's Meet the Browns," about a single mom who connects with previously unknown kin at her late father's funeral, opened in second place with \$20 million.

It was the latest success for writer-director and co-star Perry, whose past hits for Lionsgate include "Madea's Family Reunion" and "Why Did I Get Married?" Shot on modest budgets, Perry's movies play to a built-in fan base.

"You kind of know what you're going to get with Tyler Perry, and that's a good thing," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Media By Numbers. "You want to be in business with this guy because he's going to make you money every time."

"Shutter," 20th Century Fox's fright flick about a newlywed couple tormented by a spirit whose image appears in their photos, opened at No. 3 with \$10.7 million.

Just behind it at No. 4 was Owen Wilson's comedy "Drillbit Taylor," which pulled in \$10.2 million. The Paramount release stars Wilson as a laid-back homeless guy who signs on as bodyguard for three bullied teenage nerds.

The acclaimed "Under the Same Moon," a border tale about a Mexican boy trying to reunite with his mother in the United States, was No. 10 with \$2.6 million, a record opening weekend for a Spanish-language film. Released by Fox Searchlight and the Weinstein Co., the movie has taken in \$3.3 million since opening Wednesday and also took in \$1.7 million in Mexico, where it debuted this weekend.

"Under the Same Moon"

1. "Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears a Who," \$25.1 million.
2. "Tyler Perry's Meet the Browns," \$20 million.
3. "Shutter," \$10.7 million.
4. "Drillbit Taylor," \$10.2 million.
5. "10,000 B.C.," \$8.7 million.
6. "Never Back Down," \$4.9 million.
7. "College Road Trip," \$4.6 million.
8. "The Bank Job," \$4.1 million.
9. "Vantage Point," \$3.8 million.
10. "Under the Same Moon," \$2.6 million.

surpassed the previous Spanish-language record set by "Ladron Que Roba a Ladron," which opened with \$1.6 million last Labor Day weekend.

Both movies opened in far more theaters—"Under the Same Moon" at 266, "Ladron" at 340—than typical Spanish-language films, which generally debut in a handful of cinemas before gradually expanding to wider release if they click with movie-goers.

"We thought this was a movie that could play as a commercial movie, not as an arthouse movie, to Spanish-language audiences," said Peter Rice, Fox Searchlight president.

The movie started mainly in theaters catering to Spanish speakers. But it also enjoyed

strong word-of-mouth publicity in cinemas dominated by English-language crowds, where business picked up strongly over the course of the weekend, said Weinstein Co. co-founder Harvey Weinstein, whose had found success with foreign-language films such as "Cinema Paradiso" and "Amelie" when he ran Miramax.

Fox Searchlight and the Weinstein Co. plan to gradually roll "Under the Same Moon" out to more theaters in the coming weeks.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Media By Numbers LLC. Final figures will be released Monday.

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For Friday, March 21 through Thursday, March 27 only!

NOW SHOWING



Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears A Who

Friday 4:20 7:05 9:35
Saturday 1:15 4:20 7:05 9:35
Sunday 1:15 4:20 7:05
Mon thru Thurs 4:20 7:05

Jim Carrey (v), Steve Carell (v)
Family, Animated • Rated PG

Synopsis

An imaginative elephant named Horton hears a faint cry for help coming from a tiny speck of dust floating through the air. Although Horton doesn't know it yet, that speck houses an entire city named Who-ville, inhabited by the microscopic Whos, led by the Mayor. Despite being ridiculed and threatened by his neighbors, who think he has lost his mind, Horton is determined to save the particle—because "a person's a person, no matter how small."



Never Back Down

Friday 4:25 7:35 9:35
Saturday 1:25 4:25 7:30 9:55
Sunday 1:25 4:25 7:30
Mon thru Thurs 4:25 7:30

Sean Faris, Djimon Hounsou
Action, Drama • Rated PG13

Synopsis

Jake Tyler has recently moved to Orlando, Florida with his family to support his younger brother's shot at a professional tennis career. Jake was a star athlete on the football team at home, but in this new city he is an outsider with a reputation for being a quick tempered brawler. Making an attempt to fit in, at the invitation of a flirtatious classmate, Baja, Jake goes to a party where he is unwittingly pulled into a fight with a bully named Ryan McDonald.



10,000 BC

Friday 4:30 7:10 9:50
Saturday 1:30 4:30 7:10 9:50
Sunday 1:30 4:30 7:10
Mon thru Thurs 4:30 7:10

Omar Sharif, Steven Strait
Drama, Adventure • Rated PG13

Synopsis

In a remote mountain tribe, the young hunter D'Leh has found his heart's passion—the beautiful Eylet. But when a band of mysterious warlords raid his village and kidnap Eylet, D'Leh leads a small group of hunters to pursue the warlords to the end of the world to save her. As they venture into unknown lands for the first time, the group discovers there are civilizations beyond their own and that mankind's reach is far greater than they ever knew.



Rambo

Friday 4:10 7:15 10:00
Saturday 1:20 4:10 7:15 10:00
Sunday 1:20 4:10 7:15
Mon thru Thurs 4:10 7:15

Sylvester Stallone, Julie Benz
Action, Adventure • Rated R

Vantage Point

Friday 4:15 7:00 9:45
Saturday 1:10 4:15 7:00
Sunday 1:10 4:15 7:00
Mon thru Thurs 4:15 7:00

Dennis Quaid, Forest Whitaker
Drama, Thriller • Rated PG13



The Spiderwick Chronicles

Friday 4:00 7:20 9:30
Saturday 1:00 4:00 7:20 9:30
Sunday 1:00 4:00 7:20
Mon thru Thurs 4:00 7:20

Seth Rogen, Mary-Louise Parker
Fantasy, Children • Rated PG13

Jumper

Friday 4:05 7:25 9:40
Saturday 1:05 4:05 7:25 9:40
Sunday 1:05 4:05 7:25
Mon thru Thurs 4:05 7:25

Hayden Christensen, Samuel L. Jackson
Adventure, Sci-Fi • Rated PG13

• NO PASSES ■ NO PASSES OR SUPERSAVERS

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www.gohollywood.com

Where in the world isn't Ryan Seacrest?

By JOHN MAYNARD

(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

For Ryan Seacrest, mega-broadcast star, it was a dubious start. His first major TV gig? Hosting "Gladiators 2000," a 1994 teenage version of the pumped-up, battling muscleheads show. Other short-lived series followed (anyone remember "Wild Animal Games" or "The New Edge" or—we kid you not—the Internet-themed game show "Click"?). Then, in 2002, "American Idol" debuted and launched his toothy grin into the media universe. A look at the many faces of Total Seacrest Domination:



Talk Show Ryan

He substitute-hosts for Larry King and Regis Philbin, and the rumors begin that he someday might don the suspenders or hold the coffee cup in a post-Larry, post-Regis world.

Ryan Seacrest attends the Details magazine Party Thursday, March 20, 2008 in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Baby New Year Ryan

With Dick Clark at last acting (and, alas, showing) his age, he selected Seacrest as his New Year's Eve co-host. Surely one day Clark will fully knight Ryan, and we'll be sipping the bubbly to "Ryan Seacrest's New Year's Rockin' Eve."

as a big, scary, hulking Gary Busey crashes the scene—shows Seacrest can stand tall (or at least tall-ish) during a celeb crisis.

Red Carpet Ryan

Seacrest's ability to carry on while interviewing Jennifer Garner at the recent Oscars—

toughens up the hip-hop march of "Priceless," Lil Wayne does the same for "American Superstar" and Rick Ross does it for "Money Right." The poppy groove of "In the Ayer," with its early '90s booty-bass drive and Will.i.am is sure to be a summertime smash, while "Ms. Hangover," a cavalcade of alcoholic product placement, should hold down the fall.

With "Mail on Sunday," Flo Rida taps into something ordinary, something for regular folks and turns it into the rarest of commodities in today's music industry: a surefire hit.

Unlike most of hip-hop's recent hitmakers, Flo Rida doesn't really have a hook. There's no island lilt like Akon, no vocoder sound like T-Pain, no cartoonish behavior like so much of the Dirty South. Instead, Flo Rida (pronounced like "flow rider" not like the state, even though that's where he's from) simply relies on irresistibly catchy songs on "Mail on Sunday" (Atlantic).

By now, we've all had enough of Flo's first single "Low,"

which has already been No. 1 for 10 weeks, and continues to rack up tons of radio airplay for its streamlined Dirty South groove about falling in lust. But "Elevator," a collaboration with Timbaland, seems destined for more of the same dominance by offering Tim's near-patented spacey-dance backdrop, his beat-boxing flourishes and, as an added guarantee, a hook that features an "ella, ella" call.

But "Mail on Sunday" doesn't stop there. Flo Rida has hits and collaborators that will likely last him through next year. Birdman

surpassed the previous Spanish-language record set by "Ladron Que Roba a Ladron," which opened with \$1.6 million last Labor Day weekend.

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AP

Tejano singer Navaira hurt in bus crash

HOUSTON (AP)—Grammy-winning Tejano singer Emilio Navaira was critically injured Sunday when his band's bus crashed on a highway in the metro area, city and hospital officials said.

Navaira and his band Rio had performed at a Houston nightclub on Saturday night. At about 5 a.m. Sunday, the band's bus slammed into traffic barrels on Interstate 610 northbound in Bellaire, a well-to-do enclave within the city west of downtown Houston, Bellaire police Sgt. Daniel Kerr said.

Navaira was one of eight passengers on the bus who were injured, said Houston Assistant Fire Chief Omero Longoria. Navaira was listed in critical condition at Memorial Hermann Hospital, where he was being treated in the intensive care unit, said hospital administrator Lisa Lagrone.

The bus was the only vehicle involved, Kerr said. Initial news reports, based on video from traffic cameras at the scene, had said three vehicles were involved.

Navaira, 45, and Rio have released more than a dozen albums, including "Acuerdate" that won the 2003 Grammy for best Tejano album.

According to the band's Web site, Navaira was born in San Antonio and earned a music scholarship from Texas State. In



Latin Grammy nominee Emilio Navaira waves to the crowds upon arrival at the 4th Annual Latin Grammy Awards in Miami, in a Wednesday Sept. 3, 2003 file photo.

1989, he formed the band with brother Raul, who was among those who suffered minor injuries, two Houston television stations reported.

Five people were taken to Ben Taub Hospital, where their conditions were not immediately known, Longoria said. A hospital spokeswoman would

not give out any information, citing health privacy laws.

Two others were treated at Memorial Hermann and released, Lagrone said.

Kid from Brooklyn gets NY Phil debut

NEW YORK (AP)—Give that uncommon man a fanfare.

With guest conductor Riccardo Muti ill, Michael Christie gets his big chance to lead the New York Philharmonic.

But he doesn't have far to travel. Christie is music director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic.

"I'm not sure if we have to put him up in a hotel or not," joked Eric Latzky, the New York Philharmonic's spokesman.

Latzky said Sunday that Muti had to cancel because of flu.

"His doctors advised him not to travel," Latzky said.

Music director in Brook-

lyn since 2005, Christie, 33, holds similar positions with the Phoenix Symphony and the Colorado Summer Music Festival.

He makes his debut with New York's bigger Philharmonic on Thursday night, leading a performance of El-

gar's Violin Concerto with soloist Pinchas Zukerman and Copland's Third Symphony. The program is repeated on Friday and Saturday night.

The symphony's last move-

ment begins with the theme of

the booming brass "Fanfare for

the Common Man."

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Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes



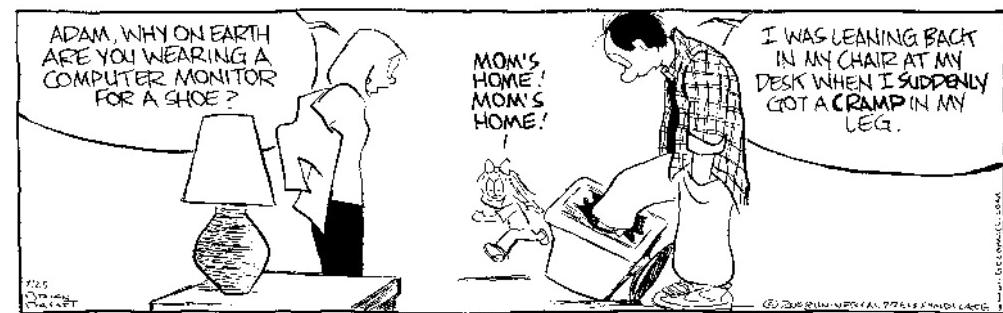
By Bill Watterson

Garfield®



By Jim Davis

Adam@home



By Bryan Basset

The Duplex



By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

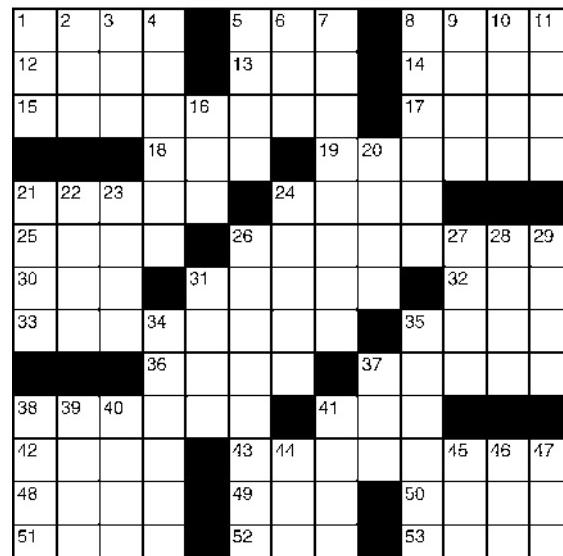
By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	33	Gold	52	Flop	11	Begged
1	Over again	rush locale	53	Penny	16	Scepter
5	Only even prime number	35 Fashion 36 Singer Osbourne	20	Pinnacles	21	Rear
8	Invitation abbr.	37 Untrue 38 Aztecs' conqueror	2	One of the Bobbseys	22	Exam format
12	Comical Carvey	41 Prohibit	3	Type measures	23	Bullets
13	Triumphant	42 Sandwich cookie	4	Aqueous	24	Eccentric
14	Get better	43 One with an excuse	5	2-Down, for one	26	Major snow-storm
15	Refusing to work	44 Excuse for everything	6	Stir-fry pan	27	"American —"
17	Harvard rival	45 Jacob's brother	7	Involving individual encounters	28	Youngsters
18	A billion years	46 Director Howard	8	Beat	29	Duel tool
19	Made lace	47 Membership	9	Member- ship	31	Wood-shaping implement
21	Plank	50 Met melody	10	Crooner Jerry	34	In
24	Former NYC mayor Ed	51 Dunce Jerry	35	Crazed person	37	"Terrif!"
25	Host	52 Flop	38	Unisex, as dorms	38	Unisex, as dorms
26	Audio device in a TV studio	53 Penny	39	Approximately	39	Authentic
30	Rotating part	DOWN	40	Authentic	41	Tie
31	Unescorted	1 Commotion	41	Costello or Ferrigno	44	Costello or Ferrigno
32	Party bowful	2 One of the Bobbseys	45	Anger	46	Relatives
		3 Type measures	47	Dine on		

Solution time: 21 mins.



Yesterday's answer 3-25

**STUMPED?**

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY:

Sheryl Swoopes, 37; Sarah Jessica Parker, 43; Elton John, 61; Aretha Franklin, 66

Happy Birthday: Money matters will count this year and you can find financial gains if you invest in something you believe in. Anxiety will prevail regardless of what you do, so stay busy and focus on what counts. Taking care of legal, medical and financial issues will be key. Your numbers are 16, 19, 23, 27, 35, 49

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Money will come to you from an unexpected source. Put a little time, effort and cash into your residence. Work with what you have and spend as little as possible and the end result will be greater gains. ☀☀☀

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Present, promote and persuade others to join your crusade today. Love is in the stars and you will position yourself for a positive move in your personal life. A serious look at your future will show others you mean business. ☀☀☀

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Keep professional and personal dealings separate. As soon as you mix the two, you will not think straight, causing you to make mistakes on both counts. Make decisions based on what you know is fact, not your assumptions. ☀☀☀

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Trust your own judgment. Don't shy away from asking for what you want. Personally, professionally and emotionally you will win in the end by showing your true colors, your likes and dislikes and your future intentions. ☀☀☀☀

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): It's time to remember the past in order to move forward with confidence. The experience you have will be worth far more than you realize. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose by securing your position. Take action. ☀☀

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Don't give up on someone you care about. If you really want to be with someone or do something, fight for it. You will win and gain popularity for your honesty, your approach and your compassion for others. ☀☀☀☀

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Focus on work and steer clear of anything that could lead to misinterpretation. The last thing you need is to give the wrong impression. Keep your personal life separate and avoid possible problems. ☀☀☀

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Travel should be on your mind or part of your agenda today. Love is taking a positive turn. An unusual approach to a project will bring results that you can be proud of. Money can be made. ☀☀☀

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Speaking out of turn or exaggerating will lead to trouble. Get your facts straight and avoid rumors or gossip. You will be questioned by someone who has an interest in what you are talking about. Be careful not to burn bridges. ☀☀☀

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You've got everyone's interest so lay your cards on the table and watch your popularity grow along with your bank account.

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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You have the right idea and everyone is going to want a part of it. Don't put your own money on the line. ☀☀☀

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Don't put yourself in an uncompromising position. Avoid conversations with people who are out to prove you wrong. You are likely to end up in an emotional situation that will cost you if you are forced to hold back the truth. ☀☀

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Take a look at an idea you have that appeared to be far-fetched in the past, and you will gather some interest. Fixing up your home, real estate deals or other investments are looking very good. Quick action on your part will seal a deal. ☀☀☀☀

Birthday Baby: You have a strong will power and a relentless determination. You are not willing to give in or back away from adversity. You are a problem solver—imaginative and interested in everything.

Eugenia's Web sites: astroadvice.com for fun, eugenialast.com for confidential consultations

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

6	5	7	2					
			9					
9	2			4	3			
9	1							
6	9	3						
8	7		3	5				
8	7	6						
9	3	4	8					

Difficulty Level ★★

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

2	6	3	4	1	8	5	7	9
5	4	9	6	2	7	8	3	1
8	7	1	5	3	9	2	4	6
6	1	2	3	8	4	7	9	5
3	9	4	7	5	1	6	8	2
7	5	8	2	9	6	3	1	4
1	2	5	8	4	3	9	6	7
4	3	7	9	6	5	1	2	8
9	8	6	1	7	2	4	5	3

Difficulty Level ★★★

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle—horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

HOT WATER BOTTLES

M	S	F	S	P	K	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	○	Ⓓ	Ⓨ	O	E	F	N	G
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Apply in person. Middle Rd. Gualo Rai

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(SUNT 0027)

Salary:\$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation. Contact: Dasan Corp. dba New Downtown Market @233-7755.

1 MECHANIC (SUNT 0028)
Salary:\$3.75/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; workmen's compensation & free medical expense. Contact: Fabriclean of CNMI Inc. dba Marianas Cleaners @234-5323/6239.

1 DRY CLEANER SPECIALIST
(SUNT 0029)

Salary:\$4.25/hour. Benefits: Self

WHATZIT Solution:
Fortunes of war

arranged housing; workmen's compensation & free medical. Contact: Fabriclean of CNMI Inc. dba Marianas Cleaners @234-6239/5323.

1 AUTOMOBILE MECHANIC
(SUNT 0030)

Salary:\$3.55-\$7.00/hour. Benefits: Employer provided housing; self arrange food; employee provided transportation; workmens compensation & medical expense. Contact: Saipan Yamas Co., Inc. dba Saipan Limousine Service @322-0239.

1 POWER PLANT MECHANIC
(TTH 0043)

Salary:\$3.55-\$6.25/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; company provided medical & worker's compensation insurance. Contact: Pacific Marine & Industrial Corporation @322-6181.

1 POWERHOUSE MECHANIC
(TTH 0044)

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- 3-Liner
- 5-Liner
- 3-Liner with picture
- 5-Liner with picture

COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)

- | |
|------|
| \$25 |
| \$35 |
| \$45 |
| \$55 |

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

All job vacancy announcements will be published for two issues in each of two successive weeks.

1st position	\$13.00
2nd position	\$5.00
Succeeding positions	\$2.00

These rates apply to all job vacancy announcements on Saipan that include corresponding benefits and positions that are all under the same company name and dba.

Newspaper clippings are also available for \$.25 per copy.

ADVERTISING DEADLINE
Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Job Vacancy Announcements

Monday Through Friday Issues: All ads placed before 12 noon will come out the next publication date.

Saturday And Sunday Issues:

- *Saipan Tribune*: All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on either Sunday or Monday issues.

CANCELLATION
Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

Job Vacancy Announcements

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

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All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

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235-NEWS

Davidson storms back to stun Georgetown



RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)—Stephen Curry couldn't stop jumping up and down at midcourt at the final buzzer.

Little Davidson was on its way to the NCAA tournament's round of 16 after another brilliant performance by its big-time guard.

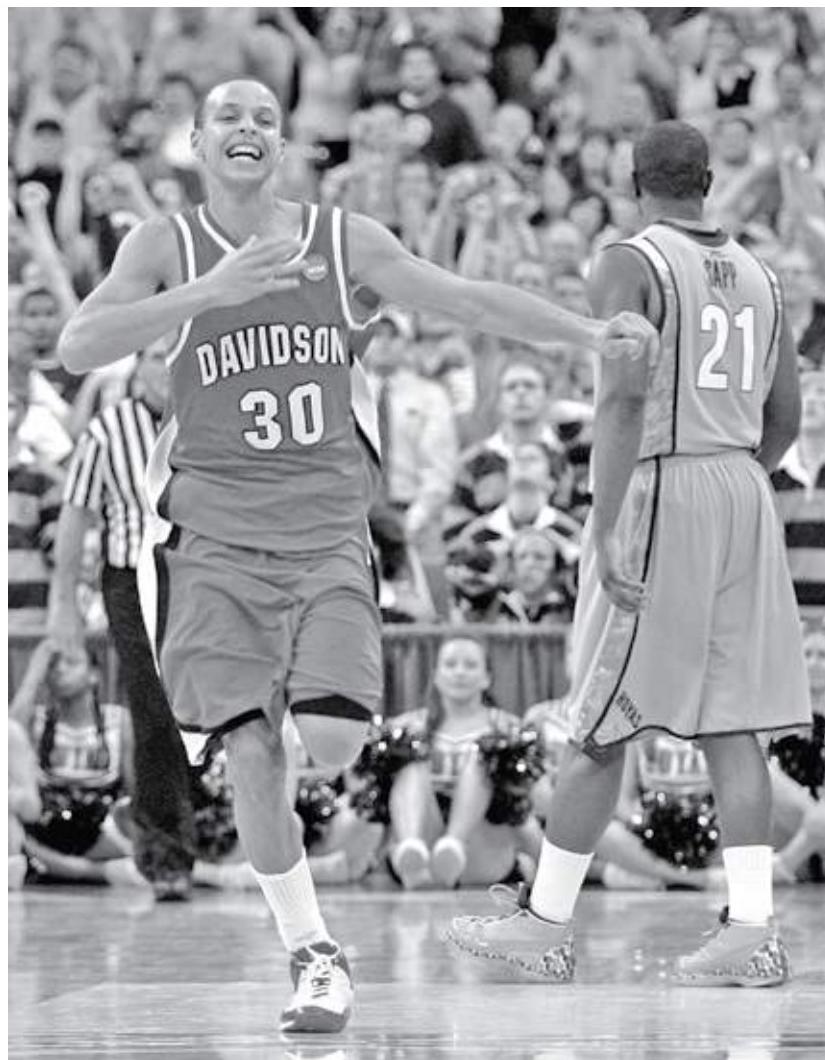
Curry scored 25 of his 30 points in the second half and Davidson staged a remarkable comeback behind their star sophomore to stun mighty Georgetown 74-70 on Sunday in the second round of the Midwest Regional.

Curry missed 10 of his first 12 shots but stepped up at crunch time for Davidson, which trailed by 16 points with 15 minutes left. He had the go-ahead basket, a key 3-pointer, and then hit five of six free throws in the final 23 seconds in a performance that left the Hoyas, and everyone else, stunned.

No. 2 seed Georgetown was shooting 71 percent from the field early in the second half and led 48-32 before a

Davidson's Stephen Curry (30) celebrates as Georgetown's Jessie Sapp (21) walks away following Davidson's 74-70 win in a second-round NCAA Midwest Regional basketball game in Raleigh, N.C., Sunday, March 23, 2008.

AP



Plenty of No. 1 and double digits remain

All the top seeds made it through. So did a couple of the country's top freshmen. Stanford's coach will be back on the sidelines. Duke will watch the rest of the tournament from the couch.

George Mason is gone, but three double-digit seeds with George Mason-like dreams remain.

After Sunday's games, there are only 16 teams remaining in the NCAA tournament, though many of the story lines that existed when the bracket came out are still alive and well.

The conversation starts with the No. 1 seeds.

UCLA, Kansas, Memphis and North Carolina all made it through. The Jayhawks and Tar Heels did it most impressively, winning their four games by an average of 28. Memphis and UCLA, meanwhile, looked vulnerable in their second-round victories.

The Bruins, in fact, lost two points on Sunday even though they didn't play. NCAA officials said the final score of their Saturday-night win over Texas A&M should be 51-49 instead of 53-49 because a meaningless, last-second dunk by Russell Westbrook didn't come before the buzzer.

"We've been getting everybody's best game," Bruins coach Ben Howland said after UCLA barely escaped. "That's why this is the greatest sporting event in all of American sports, because anybody can beat anybody."

Speaking of which, UCLA's next opponent in the West Regional is Western Kentucky, one of three double-digit seeds remaining in the tournament. The 12th-seeded Hilltoppers were part of the craziness in Tampa, where upsets reigned and 12th-seeded Villanova also advanced out of the Midwest Regional.

The Wildcats were one of the final bubble teams to make the tournament, and wound up as one of the few pieces of good news for the Big East, which

took eight teams into the first weekend—more than any conference—and left with only three.

Louisville rolled through its two games, including a 78-48 win over Oklahoma on Sunday, and West Virginia also advanced with an upset over second-seeded Duke.

The Mountaineers, who play Xavier next in the West, are coached by the combustible Bob Huggins, though Huggins was hardly the biggest newsmaker on the coaching front over the weekend.

Instead, that honor went to Trent Johnson of Stanford. Ejected in the first half against Marquette, Johnson watched from the locker room as his team won by one in overtime.

"The bottom line was, the responsibility was on me, and I was out of line," Johnson said. "Just leave it at that if you would, please."

Probably won't happen, coach.

Johnson's next game, should he choose to stick around for it, could be a good one, against Texas and Rick Barnes in the South Regional in Houston.

The other South game pits Memphis, a 77-74 winner over Mississippi State, against Michigan State. The Spartans, after being a popular pick to win the Big Ten, didn't live up to expectations and played much of the season under the radar.

It means freshman Kalin Lucas might not be as much of a household name as first-year counterparts Michael Beasley (Kansas State) and O.J. Mayo (USC)—both of whom are gone from the tournament—or Kevin Love (UCLA) and Derrick Rose (Memphis), who still remain.

But maybe not for long. Lucas combined with senior Drew Neitzel to help the Spartans pull away from Pitt for a 65-54 win Saturday and keep Tom Izzo in the running for his fifth Final Four.

"I'm jacked for the guys," Izzo said.

"When you push guys so hard, sometimes you kind of feel sorry for them. Thank God I didn't let that get to me too much, because this is what it takes."

In the Midwest, Big Ten champion Wisconsin will take on the NCAA's other double-digit surprise. That would be 10th-seeded Davidson, which beat Gonzaga for its first tournament win since 1969, then knocked out another No. 2 seed, Georgetown, for an encore.

"I'm numb right now," Davidson coach Bob McKillop said.

Kansas plays Villanova on the other side of the Midwest bracket. Those familiar with their NCAA history will note that matchup as a stark reminder that not all underdogs have to be from nowhere.

In 1988, it was Danny Manning and Kansas knocking off heavily favored Oklahoma in the finals. Three years earlier, Rollie Massimino and Villanova pulled off one of the biggest upsets ever, in a 66-64 victory over George town for the title.

"Nova is in the regional semis for the third time in the last four years.

"I think Villanova's unique in its basketball tradition," coach Jay Wright said. "We take it very seriously to uphold that tradition for the former players. That's what's important to us."

In the East, No. 3 Louisville plays No. 2 Tennessee and No. 4 Washington State plays No. 1 North Carolina.

Form held perfectly there, though the Volunteers struggled mightily against both American and Butler, while Washington State was surprisingly impressive in blowouts over Winthrop and Notre Dame.

"Big step for our program," said Wazzu coach Tony Bennett.

Even bigger steps will be taken beginning Thursday in Phoenix and Charlotte, N.C., then Friday in Detroit and Houston. (AP)

stunning collapse under the weight of 20 turnovers and Curry's dominance.

Jason Richards added 20 points and kept Davidson (28-6) in it early when Curry was missing everything.

Jessie Sapp scored 14 points and Jonathan Wallace finished with 12 for Georgetown (28-6), which lost despite shooting 63 percent from the field.

Davidson, which hadn't won an NCAA tournament game since 1969 before Friday, advanced to face Wisconsin on Friday in Detroit.

Georgetown, the nation's stingiest defensive team, came in allowing only 57.6 points per game and 37 percent shooting. That defensive prowess was on display early.

With waves of different defenders fighting through screens, Curry looked exhausted, and Davidson appeared spent.

Georgetown built a big lead and then started making mistakes. Ineffective 7-foot-2 center Roy Hibbert picked up his fourth foul by pushing off in the post. It was one of a series of turnovers that allowed Davidson to get back in it.

When Georgetown's defense finally lost Curry, he buried a 3-pointer from the right wing. He then fed Andrew Lovedale for a layup to make it 50-48 with 8:47 left.

After picking up his fourth foul with 4:15 left, Curry scored on a nifty scoop shot in the lane and hit a deep 3 to give

Davidson a 65-60 lead with 2:56 left.

It led to a roar from the partisan crowd. Not only was Davidson playing 160 miles from campus, but North Carolina fans adopted the in-state school ahead of the Tar Heels' later game against Arkansas.

Davidson was now getting the breaks, too. Curry, son of former NBA sharpshooter Dell Curry, had a 3-point attempt partially blocked, but it landed in Lovedale's hands for a layup to make it 67-60.

The Hoyas' comeback bid was foiled by Curry's free-throw shooting, allowing Davidson to extend the nation's longest winning streak to 24 in the most improbable fashion.

As the final seconds ticked down, the baby-faced Curry jumped at mid-court, did a chest bump with Richards and was mobbed by the rest of his teammates.

Then, the team gathered in front of the band and sang Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline," which had become the theme song during Davidson's memorable season. The Wildcats hadn't been a player in the NCAA tournament since Lefty Driesell led them to two regional finals in the 1960s.

Georgetown could only look on, stunned at its second-round exit a year after reaching the Final Four under coach John Thompson III.

Dorsey helps Memphis rough up the Bulldogs

NORTH LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP)—Derrick Rose and Chris Douglas-Roberts put up the fancy stats and grab most of the attention.

When Memphis needs to get down and dirty, though, it's Joey Dorsey who gets it done.

The Tigers' burly forward made his presence known on both ends of the court Sunday, finishing with 13 points, 12 rebounds, a season-high six blocks and an untold number of bumps and bruises as top-seeded Memphis outscrapped Mississippi State 77-74 in the second round of the NCAA tournament.

Three other Tigers finished in double figures, including 17 each from Rose and Douglas-Roberts.

It was the ninth straight win for Memphis (35-1), which advanced to the round of 16 for a third straight year. The Tigers will play fifth-seeded Michigan State (27-8) in the semifinals of the South Region on Friday in Houston.

Jamont Gordon had 21 points and Ben Hansbrough 19 for eighth-seeded Mississippi State, which hasn't made it out of the first weekend since the 1996 team that went to the Final Four.

But the Bulldogs came close.

Gordon made a 3-pointer with about 19 seconds left to cut Memphis' lead to 75-70. Antonio Anderson missed a pair of free throws, and Charles Rhodes slammed home a rebound. Rose was quickly fouled, but he could only make one of two.

Gordon then made a layup to cut it to 76-74 with 4.2 seconds left.

But Douglas-Roberts made a free

throw, and Gordon's long jumper at the buzzer wasn't close.

That this game wasn't going to be a thing of beauty was a given. Mississippi State and Memphis came into the tournament with two of the best defenses in the country, with the Bulldogs ranking second in the nation in both opponents' field-goal percentage (36.8) and blocks (7.9).

Mississippi State (23-11) also had the nation's leading shot blocker in Jarvis Varnado.

And the teams didn't disappoint. There was so much bumping and banging going on the players should have been wearing sponsor decals and fire suits, and anyone who entered the lane did so at his own risk. Diminutive Andre Allen—5-foot-10 and 205 pounds—got hammered so hard when he took on the 6-8, 245-pound Rhodes late in the first half that the refs had Douglas-Roberts shoot the free throws so Allen could get checked out. He was fine.

But it was Dorsey who dictated the game. He had his hand in what seemed like every shot, and he was always around the basket scooping up rebounds. When the Tigers needed a big bucket, he was there, shooting 6-of-8 from the floor. The large contingent of Memphis fans serenaded him with chants of "Joey! Joey!" when he fouled out with 24 seconds left.

The victory avenged—somewhat—Memphis' only loss of the season. Another Southeastern Conference team, Tennessee, beat the Tigers on Feb. 23 and knocked them out of the No. 1 spot in the polls.

Nowitzki hurt as Spurs rally past Mavs



DALLAS (AP)—Manu Ginobili scored eight points in a 19-0 third-quarter rally that sent the San Antonio Spurs past Dallas 88-81 Sunday, but the Mavericks came away worried mostly about the status of reigning league MVP Dirk Nowitzki.

Nowitzki hurt his lower left leg during a nasty spill late in San Antonio's game-breaking stretch. Both the ankle and knee seemed to buckle when he landed after running to block a shot. He slapped the court and put a hand to his head in agony, then sat motionless for a few minutes. He put no weight on the leg leaving the court, then was seen limping into the X-ray room.

The team said he would be re-evaluated Monday.

San Antonio actually went ahead on that play, with Tim Duncan grabbing the loose ball and scoring, wiping out what had been a 12-point Dallas lead only minutes before. Duncan added a free throw, too, and the Spurs were headed to their third straight win since a 1-6 slump.

The Spurs got some breathing room in the tight Western Conference playoff race because the Mavericks are right behind them in the standings. San Antonio also



AP

Dallas Mavericks forward Dirk Nowitzki, of Germany, is down with an injury in the third quarter of the basketball game against the San Antonio Spurs in Dallas, Sunday, March 23, 2008.

won the season series 3-1, which would help should they wind up tied—but Dallas may have to worry about just making the playoffs, especially if Nowitzki's injury is as severe as it looked.

The Mavericks lost their third straight, dropping them to 0-8 against teams with winning records since adding Jason Kidd. They are 9-8 overall with the All-Star guard.

At 44-26, Dallas was seventh in the West, ahead of Golden State, which was 42-26 before playing the Lakers on Sunday night. Mavs fans may need to be

more concerned about the next team in the standings—Denver, which was 41-28 before playing Toronto on Sunday afternoon.

Ginobili scored 26 points. He started the big rally with a layup and a 3-pointer, then hit a 3 to cap it. He also was 11-of-11 from the foul line. Dallas took only 11 free throws all game.

Duncan finished with 19 points and 13 rebounds, despite missing 11 of his first 12 shots. He made six of his last nine. Tony Parker scored 13 on 4-of-21 shooting. The Spurs made only 33 percent of their shots.

Jerry Stackhouse led Dallas with 19 points and was automatically ejected with 13.9 seconds after getting his second technical of the game; the other came for using Ginobili's face to help get up after the two collided got tangled up going for a rebound late in the third quarter.

Jason Terry scored 17 points, Josh Howard 13 and Nowitzki had 11. He also had three blocks and was part of the reason Duncan got off to such a rough start.

Kidd had seven points, seven rebounds, five assists and three turnovers.

Nuggets 109, Raptors 100

At Toronto, Allen Iverson had 36 points, Carmelo Anthony added 33 and Denver scored 100 or more for the 11th consecutive game.

Chris Bosh was one assist shy of a triple-double, finishing with 17 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists as Toronto lost for the seventh time in eight games.

Iverson, who has averaged 30.4 points in 36 career games against Toronto, made two of Denver's six 3-pointers in the fourth, including one with 1:07 remaining that capped a 7-0 Denver run and gave the Nuggets a 103-98 edge.

Wizards 95, Pistons 83

At Washington, Antawn Jamison had 24 points and 12 rebounds and Washington topped Detroit.

The Wizards earned their third straight victory. They shot 53 percent and moved 11/2 games ahead of sixth-place Philadelphia in the Eastern Conference.

Richard Hamilton scored 19 points to lead the Pistons, who have lost two in a row. Rasheed Wallace scored 11 points on 3-for-12 shooting and was called for a technical for shoving An-

dray Blatche during the Wizards' key fourth-quarter run.

Warriors 115, Lakers 111

At Los Angeles, Stephen Jackson scored six of his 31 points on two 3-pointers in the final 38 1/2 seconds, and Golden State beat Los Angeles after blowing a 26-point lead.

Monta Ellis also had 31 points along with seven rebounds and five assists for the Warriors, who won for the 10th time in 14 games. Baron Davis scored 18 points and Al Harrington added 13 points and 10 rebounds for Golden State (43-26), which remains 1 1/2 games ahead of Denver in the race for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

Kobe Bryant scored 16 of his 36 points in the fourth quarter, and added a season-high 14 rebounds and eight assists to lead the Lakers (48-22), who had their three-game winning streak snapped and fell percentage points behind the Western Conference-leading New Orleans Hornets.

Lamar Odom had 19 points and a career-high 22 rebounds and Ronny Turiaf and Derek Fisher scored 16 each for Los Angeles.

Tigers, Cabrera agree on \$152M, 8 years



DETROIT

(AP)—Miguel Cabrera and the Detroit Tigers have reached a preliminary agreement on a \$152.3 million, eight-year contract, according to a person familiar with the deal.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Sunday because the contract was not yet final. The third baseman must pass a physical before the agreement can be finalized.

Cabrera agreed on Jan. 18 to an \$11.3 million salary for this season. The new deal adds \$141 million over the following seven seasons.

Cabrera will earn \$15 million in 2009, when he would have been eligible for salary arbitration. He will average \$21 million annually over the next six seasons, when he would have been eligible for free agency.

Cabrera's average salary of \$19,037,500 will be the fourth-highest in the major leagues behind those of New York Yankees third baseman Alex Rodriguez (\$27.5 million), New York Mets pitcher Johan Santana (\$22,916,667) and Boston left fielder Manny Ramirez (\$20 million).

His deal will be the fourth-highest package. Rodriguez is starting a \$275 million, 10-year contract, Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter is entering the eighth season of a \$189 million, 10-year deal and Ramirez is in the final guaran-

tee season of a \$160 million, eight-year contract.

Aspects of Cabrera's agreement were first reported by ESPNdeportes.com.

Ace Justin Verlander said just having Cabrera around has been a positive for the team.

"What stands out to me is his personality around the clubhouse," Verlander said. "Everybody knows how good of a ball-player he is, but he's also great around the clubhouse and is a good teammate."

Slugger Gary Sheffield said signing Cabrera to a long term deal shows the team is committed to winning now and in the years to come.

"He's a future-type player," Sheffield said. "Anytime you can get a player with that amount of years on this team, you're looking at multiple championships."

Detroit acquired Cabrera from the Florida Marlins during December's winter meetings along with pitcher Dontrelle Willis.

Cabrera averaged 32 homers and 115 RBIs while hitting .318 the past four seasons for the Marlins. The only players to at least match him in their averages in all three categories over that four-year span were Albert Pujols and Vladimir Guerrero, according to STATS LLC.

Willis has often said matter-of-factly that Cabrera will be in the Hall of Fame.

Tigers manager Jim Leyland echoed the similar sentiment at the start of spring training af-

ter saying he wanted to help him become a complete player.

"Hopefully someday when he goes to Cooperstown," Leyland said, "people won't just say he was one hell of a hitter."

Cabrera has struggled at times at third base—making 23 errors last year and 17 the previous season—after primarily playing in the outfield during his first two full years in the majors.

Leyland has been pleased with Cabrera defensively, saying he has good hands and a better-than-expected arm following a recent exhibition.

The four-time All-Star was criticized by some last year for his weight, but reported to camp with the Tigers in Lakeland, Fla., after dropping some pounds. He drew rave reviews for his conditioning from teammates, such as Carlos Guillen, who have known him for years.

Florida sent Cabrera and Willis, the last players left from the Marlins' 2003 World Series championship team, to Detroit for six prospects. Cabrera made \$472,000 two years ago and \$7.4 million last season, when he was eligible for arbitration for the first time.

Two years ago, Cabrera hit a Marlins-record .339 while joining Pujols, Rodriguez and Hall of Famer Hank Greenberg as the only players to hit 25 homers and 50 doubles in a season before turning 24.

He followed that up with career highs in homers (34) and RBIs (119) last season.

Sox hope jet lag won't hurt against A's

TOKYO (AP)—The Red Sox finally have a very good reason to get out of bed. The exhibition games are over. The regular season is about to start. And their jet lag is fading—but still not gone.

"The last couple of days have been pretty rough," Tim Wakefield, master of the hypnotic knuckler, said Sunday. "My body's still adjusting, but I think last night was the first night I got a decent amount of sleep and not waking up four or five times during the night."

He was awake enough to do some sightseeing for the first time on the trip Sunday before he pitched 5 2-3 innings in that night's 9-2 victory over the Yomiuri Giants, returning to his hotel in a cab about five hours before the game.

No touring, though, for Terry Francona, manager of the defending World Series champion. The skipper with tunnel vision sees his hotel, tall buildings and Tokyo Dome, not the shrines and gardens that are part of Japan's culture.

"I had a peanut-butter sandwich for Easter and something I wasn't sure what it was," he said. "We're in a different city, but it could just as well be San Francisco. It doesn't matter. I come to the ballpark. I wake up, and I go to the ballpark."

He'll be there again Monday when his team works out ahead of Tuesday night's major league season opener

against Oakland, when former Seibu Lions great Daisuke Matsuzaka pitches for Boston. Joe Blanton is scheduled to pitch for the Athletics, who may have coped better with the time change because their trip to Tokyo was shorter. Both teams arrived Thursday night.

Oakland beat the Hanshin Tigers 10-2 on Sunday as Donnie Murphy hit a grand slam, Jack Cust had a two-run homer and Travis Buck hit a solo shot.

Boston's J.D. Drew also hit a grand slam Sunday, five months after hitting one in Game 6 of the AL championship series against Cleveland. Unlike some of his teammates, he seemed fresh.

Coco Crisp joked about the reception for Boston reliever Hideki Okajima, who spent 11 seasons with Yomiuri. He pitched a scoreless seventh, with flashes popping when he threw.

"With all the cameras and stuff, that was pretty cool," Crisp said. "I was so tired I thought it was just twilight. I thought I was dreaming. Nine o'clock in the morning (EDT), man. I hit a triple at 9 o'clock in the morning. That's crazy."

That would be 10 p.m. Tokyo time, when he tripled in a run in Boston's two-run ninth.

Bryan Corey, who pitched for Yomiuri in 2004, was talking about striking out the only batter he faced in relief of Wakefield when he started to yawn.

"I'm a little tired right now,"

he apologized. "It just hit me, a long day and a long night. Still, coming back here and pitching is nice and it was fun."

Okajima got a rousing ovation. He was an all-star as a rookie last year with the Red Sox when he posted a 2.22 ERA, better than any he had in his nine full seasons with Yomiuri before playing for Hokkaido in 2006.

"Today was the biggest ovation I've ever seen him receive here," Giants manager Tatsunori Hara said.

It's nothing compared with the roar that is sure to come from the admirers Matsuzaka when fans fill the Dome for the earliest opener in major league history.

"That was a feel-good moment for us," Francona said of Okajima's reception. "It kind of reminded me of the time Dice-K faced Ichiro (Suzuki) at Fenway" for the first time last season.

But that's in the past. On Tuesday, the winner of two of the last four World Series will face an Oakland team coming off its first sub-.500 finish in nine seasons.

Beating Boston will be tougher because Eric Chavez didn't make the trip after having two shoulder surgeries and one back operation in the last six months. Still, Francona is concerned. He may even toss and turn in bed, wondering if his team is ready for the season to start.

Tiger's streak nearing an end at Doral?



**D O R A L ,
Fla.** (AP)—Tiger Woods' unbreakable streak lives another day. Barring a big comeback, it'll live for only one more day. Geoff Ogilvy got to 17 under through nine holes and held a two-shot lead over Jim Furyk and Vijay Singh at the soggy CA Championship, which won't finish until Monday because of a three-hour weather delay during the final round.

Furyk was 15 under through 10, while Singh played nine holes. Retief Goosen and Graeme Storm were three shots back and Steve Stricker made a huge charge, shooting a final-round 63 to finish at 13 under, four shots back of Ogilvy and tied with Adam Scott.

Play was scheduled to resume Monday at 8:30 a.m., when most intrigue will be pointed toward Woods—who was five back with seven holes remaining.

"In his own mind, he probably still thinks he has a chance and I'm sure we've seen him to do crazy things before," Ogilvy said. "But Jim and Vijay have won a fair few tournaments and Adam's won a fair few tournaments.... He doesn't have to only catch me."

World Golf Championship events are some of Woods' fa-

vorites, given his 15 wins in 26 previous WGCs entering this week. But somehow, at Doral, he's looked mortal. He hasn't lost to anyone in six months, yet when play was halted, he was tied for ninth.

Ogilvy's last win was the 2006 U.S. Open. Woods missed the cut that summer at Winged Foot and has been on an absolute tear ever since, winning 16 of his last 26 official PGA Tour events and carrying winning streaks of seven straight appearances worldwide and five tournaments on tour into at Doral, a track where he's prevailed each of the past three years.

Unless he pulls off a stirring comeback, all those streaks will end, meaning he'll be a winner in only nine of his past 11 events worldwide heading into the Masters.

For anyone else, that's a superhuman clip. For Woods, it's become practically expected.

Ogilvy's bogey-free streak for the week ended after 60 holes, when he left a 35-foot par putt short on the seventh hole. He was forced to scramble at times and said he was exhausted after the long day, but he's still in the best position entering Monday.

"It's a good leaderboard," Ogilvy said. "That's what the whole point of these golf tournaments was, I guess, to get

fields like this, get everyone playing each other. I guess the idea is to have everyone have a chance with nine holes to play or 18 holes to play."

If Woods has a chance, it's a slim one, because up-and-down trends plagued him all weekend.

Woods' chances took a serious hit in the third round, when every other contender seemed to go on birdie sprees while he remained stuck in the Doral mud. Singh and Storm shot 63s, Goosen and Furyk had 64s, while Woods could only manage a third-round 72.

He gave the omnipresent throng of fans who followed him in the gallery much hope when he opened the final round with two birdies.

But he followed those with consecutive bogeys, one before the weather delay, one after at the long par-3 fourth hole. At that point, he trailed Ogilvy by six, and was a decidedly un-Tigerlike even par over his past 25 holes.

It sure didn't look like much of a tuneup for Augusta National.

Furyk opened his final round with a birdie, but two straight bogeys after that threatened to knock him out of contention. He rallied nicely, though, putting together four consecutive birdies later on the front side,



giving him 13 birdies in a 26-hole stretch.

"If I want to win the golf tournament," Furyk said, "I'm going to have to make a bunch of birdies again tomorrow."

Third-round play was suspended Saturday after 3 inches of rain fell in a three-hour stretch of the afternoon, and the final round didn't begin until shortly before noon Sunday. Final-round play was suspended for three hours because of lightning threats. By the time play resumed, there was only about 2 hours of daylight remaining, nowhere near enough time for everyone to finish.

"Still a lot of golf to go," Singh said. "Just hung in there."

Players had about a 2 1/2-hour break before starting the final round Sunday, and with more storms in the forecast, some wondered why they weren't on the course earlier.

"I think we were all asking the same question, exactly," Furyk said. "I don't know. It seems as though that would have been the safest way."

Instead, 53 of the remaining 77 players will finish Monday, when Woods will need a huge charge.

"It can be had," Woods said.

Sites set for 2nd World Baseball Classic



T O K Y O

(AP)—Mexico City, San Juan, Tokyo and Toronto were selected Monday to host first-round games during the second World Baseball Classic in 2009.

The tournament, with the same 16 countries that played in the first WBC in 2006, will switch from a round-robin to a double-elimination format during the first two rounds. Japan won the initial event, beating Cuba 10-6 in the final at San Diego.

Officials think the selection of four venues outside the continental United States to host the first round provides an opportunity to show baseball's global appeal and help return the sport to the Olympics after it is eliminated following the 2008 Games in Beijing.

"Absolutely, it will help," said Paul J. Archey, senior vice president of international business operations for Major League Baseball. "I don't think there's any doubt that the success of the WBC in 2006 and again in 2009 demonstrates the interest in the game."

Sites for the later rounds have not yet been announced. Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles is the leading candidate to host the semifinals and final.

"The 2009 World Baseball Classic will further demonstrate the remarkable global growth of our game," baseball commissioner Bud Selig said in a statement. "There has been incredible

demand to host the games of the second World Baseball Classic."

The lineup:

■ China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan will play in Group A at the Tokyo Dome from March 5-9.

■ Australia, Cuba, Mexico and South Africa will play in Group B at Mexico City's Foro Sol Stadium from March 8-12.

■ Canada, Italy, United States and Venezuela will play in Group C at Toronto's Rogers Centre from March 8-12.

■ Dominican Republic, Netherlands, Panama and Puerto Rico will play in Group D at San Juan's Hiram Bithorn Stadium from March 7-11.

Unlike 2006, teams that advance from the second round will cross over for the semifinals and face opponents from the other side of the bracket.

In the first WBC, Daisuke Matsuzaka was chosen MVP before spending his final season with the Seibu Lions. He joined the Boston Red Sox in 2007, went 15-12 with a 4.40 ERA and is scheduled to start the opening game of the regular season Tuesday night against the Oakland Athletics and starter Joe Blanton. The teams play again Wednesday night with Boston's Jon Lester facing Rich Harden.

Harden, a Canadian, missed the last WBC after undergoing surgery.

"It's every kid's dream growing up to represent your country," he said at a news conference

where the sites and teams were announced. "I'm very excited."

The tournament could present some interesting matchups between major league teammates. Matsuzaka could end up trying to strike out Jason Varitek, his batterymate with Boston. The catcher joked that he would bunt and try to steal second.

For Red Sox utility infielder Alex Cora, having a first-round pool in Puerto Rico provides a chance to spur interest in baseball in his homeland.

"Baseball in Puerto Rico has been fading," he said. "We didn't have a winter ball league this year for the first time in 70 years."

Some players thought the 2006 tournament was held too early in spring training, leaving them physically unprepared to play at full strength. Boston reliever Mike Timlin has said physical problems later that season stemmed from that.

But many players who participated were enthusiastic.

"The coolest part for me was just to see how baseball has gone worldwide," Oakland closer Huston Street said.

Harvey W. Schiller, president of the International Baseball Federation, said efforts are being made to restore baseball to the Olympics. The sport can apply to the IOC in 2009 for readmission to the 2016 games.

Varitek played in the first Olympic baseball tournament in 1992.

"I'd hate to have it taken away from other people," he said.

Falcons sign kicker Elam for \$9 million



The Atlanta Falcons have agreed to terms with Jason Elam, the record-setting kicker who is leaving Denver after 15 seasons with the Broncos.

The 38-year-old Elam confirmed the four-year, \$9 million deal in a telephone conversation.

He had been Denver's kicker since 1993, but he's coming home in a sense. He played high school football in suburban Atlanta.

"It was a decision I put a lot of thought into," Elam said. "I'm excited to be back in my hometown, although it's bittersweet. I'll be really sad to leave Denver. It's been awesome. But I'm excited about the next chapter."

Elam said he spent many sleepless nights weighing the decision of whether to remain with Denver or sign with Atlanta. What finally won him over was the Falcons' devotion to him.

"They were like, 'You're our guy and we don't care if you're 38 years old,'" Elam said. "I like their direction."

Elam and coach Mike Shanahan have been trading phone messages all day. The kicker wanted to let his coach know that he appreciated his time in Denver.

"He left me a very kind message," Elam said. "I'm going

to miss Denver. It's a parting of ways, but it's a good parting. This is a new beginning and I'm fired up."

In 1993, Elam kicked a 63-yard field goal against Jacksonville, tying Tom Dempsey's record for the longest field goal in NFL history.

Elam has reached 100 points in each of his 15 seasons and ranks fifth on the career list with 395 field goals and sixth in points with 1,786.

"We're extremely excited to add a kicker of Jason's caliber," new Atlanta coach Mike Smith said. "He's a proven winner in this league and we are happy that he chose to become a Falcon."

Elam finished last season with 15 consecutive field goals and kicked four game-winners, the most in the NFL since 1990. He also surpassed John Elway for most games in Broncos history last season.

"I never dreamed of a 15-year career, let alone with one team," Elam said. "I had a great experience. They had a tough decision to make. They were looking at me going into my 16th year and thinking, 'Do we really want to invest a lot more in him?' I didn't envy their job. I hope they understand."

Elam had a feeling the end was near several weeks ago and has been slowly gathering his personal items from his locker

at Dove Valley. It was also a chance for him to say farewell to some of his teammates.

"Fifteen years in Denver—I have no complaints whatsoever," Elam said. "I don't think I could've scripted my career any better."

The Falcons used 47-year-old Morten Andersen the last two seasons, but he doesn't have Elam's range. Andersen, the leading scorer and field goal kicker in NFL history, will have to find another team in his quest to become the league's first 50-year-old player.

Matt Prater would get the first shot at replacing Elam in Denver. He handled kickoff duties in the Broncos' last two games after being waived by Miami and Atlanta last season.

The signing of Elam was yet another major move by the Falcons, who are trying to remake their roster under Smith and new general manager Thomas Dimitroff.

Atlanta, coming off a miserable 4-12 season that fell apart after Michael Vick was linked to dogfighting, already cut tight end Alge Crumpler, running back Warrick Dunn and defensive tackle Rod Coleman in salary-cap moves. On

Thursday, they dealt two-time Pro Bowl cornerback DeAngelo Hall to Oakland for a second-round pick this year and a fifth-rounder in 2009. (AP)

 **TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES**
NBA STANDINGS**EASTERN CONFERENCE****Atlantic Division**

	W	L	Pct	GB
y-Boston	55	14	.797	-
Philadelphia	35	35	.500	20 1/2
Toronto	35	35	.500	20 1/2
New Jersey	29	41	.414	26 1/2
New York	19	50	.275	36

Southeast Division

x-Orlando	46	26	.639	-
Washington	36	33	.522	8 1/2
Atlanta	30	39	.435	14 1/2
Charlotte	25	44	.362	19 1/2
Miami	12	57	.174	32 1/2

Central Division

x-Detroit	49	20	.710	-
Cleveland	40	31	.563	10
Indiana	29	41	.414	20 1/2
Chicago	27	42	.391	22
Milwaukee	24	44	.353	24 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE**Southwest Division**

New Orleans	47	21	.691	-
Houston	47	23	.671	1
San Antonio	47	23	.671	1
Dallas	44	26	.629	4
Memphis	18	51	.261	27

Northwest Division

Utah	46	25	.648	-
Denver	42	28	.600	3 1/2
Portland	37	33	.529	8 1/2
Minnesota	18	51	.261	27
Seattle	16	54	.229	29 1/2

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	48	22	.686	-
Phoenix	47	22	.681	1/2
Golden State	43	26	.623	4 1/2
Sacramento	31	38	.449	16 1/2
L.A. Clippers	21	48	.304	26 1/2

x-clinched playoff spot**y-clinched division****Yesterday's Games**

San Antonio 88, Dallas 81
Denver 109, Toronto 100
Washington 95, Detroit 83
Golden State 115, L.A. Lakers 111

CA CHAMPIONSHIP SCORES

DORAL, Florida (AP)—Scores Sunday from the CA Championship, an \$8 million (\$5.2 million) World Golf Championships event at the 7,266-yard, par-72 Blue Course at Doral Golf Resort & Spa:

PARTIAL FINAL ROUND

Note: Play suspended due to darkness with 52 players still on the course. Round will be completed Monday morning.

Steve Stricker	71-68-73-63	275
Soren Kjeldsen	69-71-71-66	277
Aaron Baddeley	69-74-70-66	279
Justin Rose	70-71-70-68	279
John Rollins	74-71-67-68	280
Stewart Cink	66-74-71-69	280
Phil Mickelson	67-74-70-69	280
Toru Taniguchi	68-73-72-68	281
Andres Romero	68-72-73-69	282
Boo Weekley	72-73-69-68	282
Ryuji Imada	68-73-73-69	283
Justin Leonard	69-74-70-70	283
Stuart Appleby	73-71-68-71	283
Lee Westwood	71-72-72-68	283
Ross Fisher	68-73-70-72	283
Trevor Immelman	70-74-70-70	284

By The Associated Press

IAAF

From Page 28

Sapong said he was informed by OAA that the Oleai track does not meet the IAAF measurement standards during the council meeting in November 2007. "I was shocked to hear that our excellent, all-weather facility was not certified."

He said a surveyors company authorized to conduct IAAF measurement certification will arrive on Saipan and carry out the measurement report and after that, the IAAF will issue the certification. The amount for this project is over \$10,900 and does not include repairs on the track."

Sapong added they are now seeking the local business community's help in supporting them in hosting the event from June 21 to 28.

"The local organizing committee is working very hard to ensure that [Saipan] host this event as it will be by far the biggest athletics event in the North Pacific Region."

For more information, email Sapong at sapong@pticom.com.

Lazaro, Villaflor rule weekend badminton open

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saiplantribune.com
REPORTER



The duo of Jojo Lazaro and Christy Villaflor bested five other pairs

to rule the Northern Marianas Badminton Federation weekend open, which returned after a weeklong break last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Lazaro and Villaflor defeated the pair of Shirley Kim and Bong Soller, 21-19, 21-16, in the finals. They earned the first finals berth after a hard-earned 21-15, 20-22, 21-19 decision against the tandem of NMBF president Marconi Calindas and Michelle Callon.

Kim and Soller, meanwhile, dispatched the Marlene Peraja-Edwin Montoya tandem in the other semis match, 21-14, 21-19.

The weekend open is a double-elimination round format depending on the number of pairs that join in the one-day games, which is being held every Saturday morning from 8am to 11am.

The weekend open is also a practice session for NMBF players to prepare them for the upcoming tournament on April 19.

The April 19 tournament is only open to paid members and is tentatively set every Monday and Saturday.

Tournament director Macoi Aguda will start distributing entry forms and would accept registration for interested players. The classification of all players will be discussed in a separate meeting, while organizers are also finalizing the entrance fee and prize money.

Aguda is also seeking volunteers for umpires, scorers, linemen, and tournament committee members. Those who would volunteer are advised not to join the tournament.

AN EVENT

From Page 28

Grand Prix. "However, before the track certification can be accomplished, damages along the track had to be [repaired]."

Sapong said having the Oleai track certified would attract athletes that will join the Beijing Olympics in August this year. "[It] will also benefit the CNMI's tourism market as it will be one of the certified tracks in Oceania. We are seeking the public's help in maintaining our track [in good condition]."

Sapong added they are now seeking the local business community's help in supporting them in hosting the event from June 21 to 28.

"The local organizing committee is working very hard to ensure that [Saipan] host this event as it will be by far the biggest athletics event in the North Pacific Region."

For more information, email Sapong at sapong@pticom.com.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Christy Villaflor, left, and Jojo Lazaro show off their prize money after winning Saturday's Northern Marianas Badminton Federation Saturday Weekend Open at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Jazy Cup bike race set in April

The 2008 Jazy Cup Tour de Marianas bicycle race is set to hold its second stage on Saipan next month.

Organizers are informing bikers to prepare for the two-stage road race, which is tentatively set in the weekend of April.

Stage 1 will be held in Guam at 5am on April 3 and 4 from Yigo Amusement Park to USO beach in Piti.

Stage 2 will be on Saipan where the first leg will be a two-lap race starting from FHP Health Center and Beach Road. The second leg

is a 24.3-kilometer race in the same route of the Hell of the Marianas and Tagaman Triathlon.

Organizers are still finalizing the other details of the race and they will release more information as the event nears.

(Jon Perez)

encounter any negative experience during their stay."

He added Grand Hotel in the past has hosted high school baseball teams from Japan and the professional Korean baseball squad LG Twins. "Basically we have an idea how to handle a big number delegation."

Cho also suggested to the local organizing committee that they should put up an information booth at the hotels where the guests would be staying for additional assistance before, during, and after the tournament.

Asia-Pacific Regional Tournament director Mike Borja said they had already informed Gov. Benigno R. Fitial about Saipan's hosting and he wanted the event to be big.

The local organizing committee has also invited Rep. Ray Tebuteb to join them in tomorrow's meeting to seek ways on how the legislature and the government can assist them without spending too much.

Aside from Tan, Cho, and Borja, others that attended the meeting are CNMI district administrator and international board member James Ada, and committee members Joe Salas, Joey Dela Cruz, Cathy Salas, and Annie Flores.

An expected 104 official delegates from the four participating countries that includes the players, managers, coaches, officials, and umpires will be joining in the weeklong tournament slated from June 26 to July 4.

Hong Kong and Indonesia are expected to send two teams, while Guam, the Philippines, and host CNMI will be competing in all three divisions. India may also compete and has asked to extend the deadline of the submission of requirements on April 15.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Tournament is a qualifying tournament for all three divisions—Junior, Senior, and Big League. Saipan last hosted the regional tournament in 2001.

The World Series for the Junior League (13-14) will be held in Taylor, Michigan while Bangor, Maine will host the Senior League (15-16). The Big League World Series (17-18) will be held on Easley, South Carolina.

"We are going to try to do a better job of keeping information flowing, and fun events lined up to keep people motivated to train," said Quinn.

For more information, email *NMITF@yahoo-groups.com*.

QUINN

From Page 28</



Tiger's streak nearing an end at Doral?

Tiger Woods' unbeaten streak lives another day. Barring a big comeback, it'll live for only one more day.

26

Saipan Tribune Sports

28 TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2008



Davidson storms back to stun Georgetown

Stephen Curry couldn't stop jumping up and down at midcourt at the final buzzer. Little Davidson was on its way to the NCAA tournament's round of 16 after another brilliant performance by its big-time guard.

24

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Dolphins swim past foes in Senior League

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

The PTI Dolphins celebrated Commonwealth Day yesterday with a 12-7 win over the Fielders in Senior League action in the Saipan Little League at the Francisco M. Palacios Baseball Field.

The Dolphins used an eight-run first-inning scoring spree then relied on the steady pitching of Anthony Rogolifo and Jonathan Tydingco to secure the win.

Holding a 3-0 lead, with two outs and two runners on base in the first inning, the Dolphins made it 5-0 on John Paul Lizama's two-RBI triple. Lizama later scored on a Tomas Camacho single.

C a m a c h o reached home on an Ofero Taitano two-run home run for an 8-0 count.

The Dolphins made it 10-0 after 4 1/2 innings but the Fielders scored six times in the bottom of the fourth to close in.

It turned out it was the best that they could do as Rogolifo and Tydingco alternated on the mound in holding off the Fielders' late surge. Rogolifo and Tydingco combined for nine hits with all runs earned, with four strikeouts, and seven walks.

Taitano went 1-for-2 with two runs, a home run, and two RBIs, while Lizama went 2-for-3 with one run, a triple, and two RBIs.



JON PEREZ

Ofero Taitano, seen here in a file photo, homered twice to lead the PTI Dolphins to consecutive wins in games yesterday and last Saturday in the Senior League division of the Saipan Little League at the Francisco M. Palacios Baseball Field.

IAAF approves NMA grant for track

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER



Northern Marianas Athletics secretary general Robin Sapong announced yesterday that the International Association of Athletics

Federation would fund the measurement certification of the Oleai Track and Field Facility inside the Susupe Sports Complex.

Sapong said Oceania Athletics Association gave him the confirmation that the IAAF has approved the funding that would certify the Oleai track, which is one of the IAAF's requirements.

The measurement certification is one

of IAAF's requirements in terms of conducting the 2008 OAA Area Championship and Grand Prix Series on a certified track.

"With the help from [Oceania Area Group representative] Bill Bailey, IAAF president [Lamine Diack] agreed to fund the certification of the Oleai track," said Sapong.

See IAAF on Page 27



JON PEREZ

The Oleai Track and Field facility is set to get the measurement certification needed in time for the 2008 Oceania Athletics Association Area Championship and Grand Prix Series in June.

'An event that we can be proud of'

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Marianas Visitors Authority chairman Jerry Tan assured the organizing committee of the 2008 Asia-Pacific Junior, Senior, and Big League Regional Tournament that the upcoming event would be something the CNMI can be proud of.

Tan, who attended last Friday's meeting at the Gilbert C. Ada Gym conference room, said that MVA would do their best to provide assistance to the local organizing committee.

Tan, who is also the president of Tan Holdings Corp. that operates the

Saipan Grand Hotel and Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan, said in the meeting that they would make sure the delegates would leave with a smile on their faces and would remember their brief stay on Saipan.

He said the Asia-Pacific Regional Tournament is Saipan's chance to put its best foot forward as it plays host to off-island teams from Guam, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the Philippines, and possibly India.

"We want to do our best to provide them the things they need to have a memorable stay on Saipan," said Tan, who added this is one area of

See AN EVENT on Page 27

Dolphins 11, Lion King 3

It was also a Taitano-Lizama show on Saturday when they again led the Dolphins to an 11-3 crushing of the Kagman Lion King.

Taitano again homered in that game going 2-for-5 with two runs and two RBIs, while Lizama went 2-for-2 with two runs, a triple, and an RBI.

Vince Cepeda and Tydingco combined for three hits, seven strikeouts and three walks.

BIG LEAGUE Jets 11, Falcons 4

World Series pitcher Shane Yamada had

a no-relief job on the mound to lead the Jets to an 11-4 triumph over the Falcons.

Yamada held the Falcons to five hits with seven strikeouts and four walks.

Jesus Iguel went 3-for-4 with three runs and three triples, while Ben Leon Guerrero, who is a member of the 2007 CNMI Big League team that played in the World Series in Easley, South Carolina, went 3-for-5 with a triple and two runs.

Ryan Ada went 2-for-4 with two doubles for the Falcons.

Games in the Majors and Junior league divisions are still being played at press time.

Quinn is new NMITF president

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Longtime Saipan resident and triathlon enthusiast Russ Quinn was elected as the new Northern Mariana Islands Triathlon Federation president during the group's general membership meeting last Saturday at Bobby Cadillac's in Garapan.

Quinn replaced former president Brad Ruszala, who stepped down due to conflicts with his work schedule and obligations in the CNMI National Men's Football Team.

Quinn leads the 2008 NMITF board that includes Joshua Berger, vice president; Lewie Tenorio, secretary; Mike Johnson, treasurer; and board members Fred Camacho, Rex Kosack, and Mike Stewart.

He said their first order of business is to set up a calendar of events where

See QUINN on Page 27



Russ Quinn steers his bike at the Last Command Post in Marpi during the 19th Tagaman Triathlon. Quinn was elected as the new Northern Mariana Islands Triathlon Federation president.

JON PEREZ